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ABSTRACT

The nine papers in this volume represent a majority of the presentations at a conference that examined in detail employee development (ED) initiatives from Europe and North America. An introduction provides a contextual background to the vocational training and education debates characterizing policy development in the European and North American contexts. "Perspectives on a Learning Workforce" (J. F. Smith) outlines current official policies in the United Kingdom to learning in the workplace that are based on market forces and voluntaristic principles. "The UAW-Ford Life/Education Planning Program" (Robert S. Toronto) focuses on an educational advising program jointly sponsored by the United Auto Workers and the Ford Motor Company. "Workplace Learning and Redesign Initiatives in Switzerland" (Margrit Hugentobler, Ruedi Keller) addresses the relationship between technological-organizational redesign and changes in work organization and employee competence development. "Quality Circles as Learning Contexts" (Urpo Sarala) raises questions about the potential and limitations of quality circles and employee learning. "The Employee Development and Assistance Programme" describes the Ford Motor Company's joint program. "Employee Development in Baxi Heating" illustrates the importance of developing basic education and communication skills as one way of involving semi- and unskilled workers in learning opportunities. "Warm Hearts or Cool Business? Employers' Attitude to Workplace Basic Skills Programs" (Fiona Frank, Mary Hamilton) presents a model for looking at the actors or stakeholders involved in workplace basic education schemes and discusses employers' views on the benefits of and blocks to setting up basic education schemes at the workplace. "An Overview of Workplace Education in Scotland, with Particular Reference to the Work of the Scottish Community Education Council and 'Positive Performance'" (S. Wilkinson) provides an overview of pedagogical issues involved in adult learning in the workplace. "Employee Development in the UK: The Leeds Adult Learners at Work Research Project" (Keith Forrester et al.) reports on an investigation of the extent of employee development learning programs within British companies and of the varied nature of the programs. (YLB)

Department of Adult
Continuing Education
University of Leeds

ED 367 834

Developing a Learning Workforce

An International Conference

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Department of
Adult Continuing Education

DEVELOPING A LEARNING WORKFORCE

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Keith Forrester
John Payne
Kevin Ward
(editors)

University of Leeds
England
12-14 July 1993

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DEVELOPING A LEARNING WORKFORCE:

AN INTRODUCTION

Keith Forrester
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DEVELOPING A LEARNING WORKFORCE: AN INTRODUCTION

In 1991, the Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds began a two-year research project into the nature and growth of Employee Development learning programmes within the workplace. Funded by the University Funding Council, the research programme aimed to:

i) investigate the extent of Employee Development (ED) learning programmes within British companies and public sector services;

ii) analyse the reasons and circumstances within workplaces, in Britain primarily but also elsewhere, that gave rise to ED programmes, and

iii) explore the varied nature of ED programmes.

By 'Employee Development' schemes, we mean all those training and education initiatives in the workplace which:

a)	provide a major focus on the **personal development** of employees. ED schemes may encompass job-related learning but are **broader** than job-specific training;
b)	provide learning opportunities for substantial sectors of the workforce previously excluded from job-specific training and educational initiatives especially for those employees with limited previous formal education experience;
c)	provide an employee-centred learning approach with learning choices and opportunities available to participants;
d)	provide on-going learning opportunities rather than a one-off opportunity;
e)	involve employees and/or their trade unions in the origins, development and administration of the programme;
f)	encourage the right to learning while at work.

In September 1991, the research programme began with a national conference 'Towards a Learning Workforce', organised in conjunction with the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). In July 1993, the research work was concluded with an International Conference, 'Developing a Learning Workforce'. Involving employees, trainers, policy-makers, employer's representatives, trade unionists, researchers and adult continuing educationalists, the 1993 Conference provided the opportunity to examine in detail Employee Development initiatives from Europe and North America over a three day period. The papers collected in this volume represent a majority of the presentations delivered at this Conference and, as requested, will be distributed to all the Conference participants, together with the Final Report from the 'Adult Learners at Work' project at the University of Leeds (Forrester, Payne and Ward, 1993).

The case-studies and presentations for the Conference were deliberately diverse with various organisational frameworks, differing objectives, sectors and locations. These are outlined in the second part of these introductory notes. First, however, we provide a necessarily selective contextual background to the vocational training and education debates characterising policy development in the European and North American contexts. The importance of Employee Development learning programmes, we suggest, has to be situated within this wider context in order for their significance to be properly appreciated.

Vocational Education and Training

In a period of economic recession and increasing competition at a global level, governments throughout the West voiced their concerns over the nature and extent of vocational education and training (VET). In the last decade, the belief that VET is a key factor, if not **the** key factor, in explaining differences of international economic competitiveness has become the received wisdom. The need to participate in the high quality, high value added product markets has been endorsed by nearly all political parties. In contrast to what some commentators have labelled 'a low skill equilibrium', whereby the demand for skills is relatively limited and unsophisticated due to existing industrial processes and products, the opposing viewpoint stressed the importance of higher investment in technological research and development. Economic policy formation in the 1980s, especially in America and Britain, was dominated by 'supply-side' considerations, such as institutional rigidities in the labour market. Flexible working practices, expressed through 'functional flexibility' or 'multi-skilling' have figured prominently in prescriptive solutions to deepening economic problems throughout the Western economies.

National governments are, hoever, only one of the actors seeking to influence developments and shape outcomes from VET activity. Other agencies too have a stake in the efforts aimed at the improvement of human capital within an organisation. If the overriding concern of national governments throughout Europe and North America is with the role of VET within macro-economic polity issues centred on competitive advantage, it is not the case that the other actors necessarily share this agenda. For the employers, for example, their primary objective is likely to be the improvement of employees' ability to perform certain tasks. Improving particular 'competancies' rather than the development of transferable skills within a knowledge based perspective is likely to be the priority. There is also the choice of recruiting the required skills from outside the wokplace and thereby minimising the training efforts and costs. In contrast to both governments and employers, employees will be interested in increased financial returns resulting from their training. A quick review of the VET literature, however, indicates the failure to recognise the varied, and often, contradictory agenda's and strategies resulting from the interplay between these three agencies. The reality of training is of far greater complexity than is generally portrayed in much of the prescriptively-dominated literature. In particular, the absence of serious and systematic research activity around the learning experiences and aspirations of the employees themselves is particularly noticeable. Our own research work with employees in the UK retail sector has illustrated the limitations of the traditional employee stereotypical perspective centred on pecuniary gain (Forrester et al, 1994).

As we noted in the Final Report (Forrester, Payne and Ward, 1993)

> 'the crisis of UK adult training policy as it emerged in the 1980s was a crisis rich in contradictions, ironies, abrupt changes of policy and unintended outcomes. It increasingly took the form of a moral panic, with the concern to 'do something about the unemployed' being replaced as unemployment began to decrease in the mid-80s by a tendency to ascribe all the ills of British industry to a 'lack of training'. By the early 1990s, there was widespread political agreement that improvement in the European and North American economies skill base was a vital prerequisite for economic success. The means, however, by which this might be achieved was not subject to the same degree of consensus. The heart of the disagreement about the means was pointed out by Sheldrake and Vickerstaff (1987.54): 'We have lacked both the individualistic approach, which perceives the pursuit of training as a matter of personal investment, and the collectivist orientation which sees training as central to the general enrichment of society as a whole'.

By the early 1990s, there was an increasing number of studies which critically reviewed the VET 'truths' which had emerged during the late 1980s. Close examination of the policies and assumptions informing these policies were produced which challenged the sometimes widely optimistic claims of government activity and helped account for the overall disappointing VET

outcomes resulting from these policies. For those Western governments driven by a wish to 'make markets work better', the absence of any serious analysis of these societal and state-level institutions impacting on skill levels was particularly worrying. Similarly, the absence of attention on workplace industrial relations obscured the linkages between macro policy and micro practice. As Ball (1991.10) noted when commenting on the process of policy formation,

> 'the mechanisms of restructuring and the policies which facilitate and legitimise change are actually brought about through actions and interactions of a whole variety of particular people and groups. But at the level of social action these mechanisms and the formulation and implementation of policies are neither smooth nor neat'.

The Widening Debate

As a result of these studies in the 1980s and the detailed information recording Britain's poor international record in the area of vocational education and training, the debate over these issues intensified. The focus of much of the disagreement centres on how to improve both the quality and the quantity of vocational education and training. In Britain, as in other countries (including Scandinavia, in the late 1980s), much of the discussion was shaped by government policy interventions in the area. Youth unemployment and training schemes, the weakness of the compulsory and post-compulsory education systems, the inadequacy or lack of national transferrable VET systems and the lack of positive attitudes towards training by significant groups of employers were some of the issues that were subject to government action in Britain. Vocational education and training continued to maintain a high profile as a focus of national policy debate of least significance perhaps, in the national debates, were the concerns raised by adult continuing educationalists outside of the workplace and also, by those professional adult trainers and educationalists within the workplace. The importance of employees investing in their own learning and having some ownership and stake in company training and education initiatives with clearly defined and accepted ladders of progression, was emphasised by these commentators. The importance of informal learning within a workplace environment designed to encourage learning as an integral part of work was emphasised by the adult continuing education 'professionals' but ignored by the more authoritative considerations of the economists, accountants and government ministers. Above all, repeatedly questioned the adult learning specialists "what is to happen to those who traditionally have been excluded from VET and who quickly learn that workplace training is not for them?" The missing millions of employees, or the 70% who have had no recent training or education opportunities at work or elsewhere in Britain, epitomised the failings of 'market-driven' solutions to this country's 'training scandal' (Keep, 1989). Identifying and overcoming perceived barriers to participation are not prominent items on the VET agenda. Similarly, the needs and aspirations of the rapidly growing numbers of part-time workers in the labour market merit little discussion or activity.

Employee Development learning programmes (EDs) emerged in Britain towards the end of the 1980s and were much influenced by the North American examples from the early 1980s. Although part of that tradition concerned with the nature and extent of the skills base, the motives surrounding their origins and subsequent developments remain complex. In Britain, for example, there is a far weaker 'joint' element, involving both employers and trade unions than in the United States (Ferman et al, 1991). Instead, there is, currently, a dominant 'human resource' development perspective, initiated by the employers and seen as an important element in a longer term strategic corporate vision. Irrespective of their origins and the pluralistic arrangements for organising ED programmes, there are an identifiable number of learning factors which can be seen as overcoming some of the more job-related VET schemes. The list below, summarised from the Final Report, illustrates some of the more important issues addressed in ED programmes:

a)	The opportunity to resume education in later life can compensate for negative experiences of initial education
b)	Flexibly operated ED schemes, especially where Open Learning is a component, can help break down the barriers to participation in conventional Further and Adult Education represented by shift-work patterns
c)	ED schemes allow for the development of employees beyond the limits of training required for current tasks
d)	ED schemes have particular benefits in unlocking the aspirations of unqualified employees, especially women
e)	ED can begin to tackle the major problem of lack of confidence that many adults experience in their working lives and beyond
f)	ED schemes can help employees prepare for the unpredictable nature of the labour market, and the possibility of future redeployment or redundancy.

The above factors are concerned with employee's perspectives. From an employer's point of view, a number of additional factors have been discovered from the research:

a)	Employers hope that employees will acquire a clearer understanding of how their job fits in with a broader whole firm perspective. This should encourage them to identify with the firm's overall objectives
b)	ED is part of management strategy to encourage flexibility, ie. less rigid demarcations, the ability to take on new tasks, team-work and positive attitudes to change
c)	ED schemes can contribute towards the aspirations of employers to implement equal opportunity practices
d)	ED is a positive contribution towards developing a 'learning culture in the workplace'
e)	ED can contribute towards creating a vibrant internal labour market, which is of particular importance to employers with plans for future expansion.

Given the recent development of Employee Development learning programmes within European and North American economies, there is at present a lack of solid and systematic evaluative criteria on the varied outcomes of the schemes. Despite this serious shortcoming, anecdotal evidence from a number of research reports have indicated the potential benefits to the various parties involved in such schemes. Above all perhaps, the schemes point in a direction that confronts some of the problems outlined by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (1993.4)

> 'we argue that the (training) targets can only be attained by radical changes in the way in which education and training in the UK is organised and financed. The targets cannot be achieved without extending the 'learning community' far beyond those who have traditionally participated in education and training'.

Case Studies: An Overview

Given that the Conference was held in the UK, it was felt important to provide an overview of the UK government's approach to learning amongst the workforce. In Chapter 1, Jim Smith outlines current official policies to learning in the workplace which are based on market forces and voluntaristic principles.

Given the extensive nature of Employee Development schemes in North America, it is important to analyse the organisational framework and outcomes of initiatives. Programmes in the auto industry, in particular, are well known; and UAW-FORD have collaborated with the University of Michigan in the development and evaluation of the Life Education Planning Programme under the umbrella of the UAW-FORD Education Development and Training Programme. These programmes, as Bob Toronto indicates in Chapter Two, have provided learning opportunities for workers, and also enabled employers, trade unions and educational institutions to adapt, collaborate and evaluate initiatives.

The case study by Margrit Hugentobler and Ruedi Keller (Workplace Learning and Redesign Initiatives in Switzerland) in Chapter Three is not based on the development of broad-based educational programmes. In the context of several recent project initiatives, they address the relationship between technological-organisational redesign, and changes in work organisation, and employee competence development. They question traditional organisational structures and the existing distribution of authority and control; and they emphasise both the importance of closer integration between educational institutions and industry, and the need for pro-active trade unions.

There has been great interest in Quality Circles (as Urpo Sarala points out in Chapter Four in the case study on 'Quality Circles as Learning Contexts') since 1962, when they were first introduced as a new concept for organisational development. It appears, however, that the relationship between Quality Circles and Employee Learning has not been systematically analysed. This case study, then, raises interesting questions about the potential and limitations of Quality Circles and employee learning.

Employee Development schemes should be aimed at **all** employees in a company. It is often difficult, however, to gain precise information about participation in learning. In Chapter Five, the Ford Motor Company's joint Employee Development and Assistance Programme (EDAP) is described. This has been well-publicised in the UK, and has succeeded in attracting large number of employees to a wide range of educational opportunities which are utilised for personal and career development. The case study from Baxi Heating, UK in Chapter Six on Employee Development illustrates the importance of developing basic educational and communication skills as one way of involving semi- and unskilled workers in learning opportunities. This company was one of several which were involved in research conducted by the University of Lancaster. This is reported in the paper entitled 'Warm Hearts or Cool Business. Employers' Attitudes to Workplace Basic Skills Programmes'. In Chapter Seven, Fiona Frank and Mary Hamilton analyse employers' views on the benefits of, and barriers to, setting up basic educational schemes in the workplace.

In addition to describing and analysing the aims, outcomes and organisational structures of initiatives such as UAW-Ford, EDAP and Baxi Heating, it is also important to examine the processes involved in adults learning in the workplace. In Chapter Eight, Steve Wilkinson provides an overview of some of these pedagogical issues by drawing on recent experiences in Scotland.

Finally, in Chapter Nine, there is a report on the University of Leeds Adult Learning at Work research project which investigated the extent of Employee Development learning programmes within British companies and explored the varied nature of Employee Development programmes.

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CHAPTER ONE

PERSPECTIVES ON A LEARNING WORKFORCE

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PERSPECTIVES ON A LEARNING WORKFORCE

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[1]

Introduction

In this paper I aim to give some perspectives on the UK Government's approach to learning amongst the workforce. First I shall set out some facts about such learning in the UK in recent years; second I shall discuss the general shape of the Government's policy. In Britain this policy is based on market forces and voluntary policies. It contrasts strongly with policies adopted in the past. It may be profitable for the Conference to compare this approach with policies pursued in other countries.

Learning amongst the work force needs to be defined carefully. It will certainly contain learning which consists of training to do particular jobs and tasks in employment. But it should extend to education in a wider sense as well. It is generally helpful to take a broad definition, and to regard workforce learning as all learning arranged for employees by the employer or by the employer in agreement with employees. It would **not** including learning organised by individual employees to be undertaken in their private time and/or away from the workplace.

Background

To see workforce learning more clearly in context it is necessary briefly to review the total map of learning activity in Britain. Diagram 1 illustrates. The map can be divided into two parts.

SIMPLIFIED SCHEMATIC MAP OF TOTAL UK LEARNING ACTIVITY

Full-time Education	**Learning Outside Full-time Education**
Up to 16 Primary and Secondary (Compulsory)	Youth Training, Training for Work, ESF
---	---
Further Education 16-19 (Non-compulsory)	Individually arranged learning Employer arranged learning
---	---
Higher Education 18+ (Non-compulsory)	Employer arranged learning Work Force Learning
---	---
Other Adult Education	Joint Employer-Employee arranged learning

There is no significance in the relative size of components in the diagram.

[1] **(The views of the author are personal and do not reflect the views of the Employment Department or its ministers)**

The **first part** relates to full time education, principally for young people prior to entering the world of work. This breaks down into four elements. First there is primary and secondary full time compulsory education which ends around the age of 16. Then there is education available from 16 to 18 or 19 on a voluntary basis. This phase of education can be undertaken in schools or further education colleges. Thirdly at the age of 18 or 19 a minority of young people can go on to higher education in universities. Finally there is a residual (but still important) category of adult learners who are supported more or less full time by the State.

Although learners can privately purchase education in all these levels, most do not; for these, right the way up to first degree university level, the State will fund the learning process. Up to the age of 18 or 19 young people normally reside with their parents and education is free for all who want it. In higher education up to first degree level the Government has in recent years introduced an element of loan finance alongside grant funding.

The **second part** covers all learning going on outside full time education in the world of work and non-employment. Here there is State provision for learning in the form of the Youth Training scheme for people 16-18 who have left full time education and who wish to pursue work-related training for a national vocational qualification or equivalent. In addition, there is a major training scheme available for longer term unemployed people, called Training for Work, recently supplemented by a parallel programme called Learning for Work. Training for Work offers work-related training with the primary intention of getting people back to work. It also offers work experience. Finally there is a substantial programme of training for unemployed people supported by the European Social Fund.

All the rest in this second part of the learning map is either learning arranged by individuals, or learning arranged by employers or by employers and employees jointly, ie workforce learning. Learning in both categories can be acquired from universities, colleges of further education and other educational institutions, or from the private sector.

In this particular context we are concerned only with workforce learning, ie the bottom right hand corner of the Diagram. Such learning - as befits the highlighting - bulks very large in the totality of all learning outside full time education. Very little State subsidy sustains it, and the vast majority of fees are paid for by the employers. It consists very largely of initial training, eg apprenticeships or induction training, and job specific training. Learning which is devoted to basic core skills, or broadly based education, or learning which has a leisure objective are all elements which can be found on the map. But they are relatively small against the more job-specific and skill related learning.

Workforce learning of the kind described brings two sets of preferences into play. There are employers who quite properly are keen to pursue the economic interests of their companies and organisations. There are also the employees whose preferences cover not only in-company benefits, but wider questions of job or personal satisfactions, or labour market possibilities with other employers. Effective arrangements for workforce learning have to balance these two sets of preferences. At present employers interests strongly predominate in the mix.

Some key facts about Britain

What do we know about workforce learning in Britain? The best available evidence is still the national survey done in 1987, published as 'Training in Britain Individuals Perspectives' in 1989. This study was conducted by the Policy Studies Institute for the Employment Department. It involved around 2,500 personal interviews of individuals, and collected a large amount of useful data on their participation in vocational education and training.

This survey found that around one third of employed persons interviewed had had some experience of vocation education or training on a wide definition in the previous three years. Some three quarters of this total learning activity was arranged by the employer and the vast

proportion of it was also paid for exclusively by the employer. In other words the proportion of workforce learning arranged and paid for by individuals was (and still is) very much in the minority. The employer's wishes seem extremely significant.

Looking at spells of employer-arranged vocational education or training lasting longer than three days, the survey showed that 90% of the learning related to the existing job, and 10% only related to new occupations and activities. The learning is therefore very focused and specific. It is not so much to do with reallocating labour resources into new activities as with helping people who are sitting in particular jobs to do them or do them more effectively.

Looking at a breakdown of the 90% relating to the particular job, some two thirds is focused on helping employees to do their jobs better or differently, and only one third on helping them to start the job itself.

Other salient features of the learning arranged by or with employers can be set out briefly:

a) the vast bulk of the learning consists of short episodes of learning. There is a marked difference here from learning arranged by individuals which has much longer durations and greater use of qualifications;

b) half of the learning is undertaken on the employers premises, either at the location of work or in training premises owned by the employer. only a quarter of the learning is undertaken at local colleges. If colleges want to pursue a greater role in employer-arranged training then they need to note that the activity is strongly centred around the employer;

c) a considerable proportion of the training and learning is undertaken by more senior workers such as supervisors and professionals. The manual workers get very much less;

d) young people tend to get rather more than older people;

e) men have a higher proportion of the learning than the women;

f) full time employees get more than part time employees;

g) employees in big companies get considerably more than employees in small companies.

These structural facts about workforce learning need to be explained. No doubt there are cultural and societal influences at work. But to a large extent they arise from the dominance of the employers' perceived economic interest in setting learning goals.

Even so, there is little evidence that individual employees are very dissatisfied with the pattern projected upon them by the employer. 85% of individuals in the Training in Britain survey were satisfied or very satisfied with their recent learning. While just under half of employees felt they were free to choose to undertake learning suggested by the employer or not, around half felt they had to undertake the learning at the employer's insistence. Indeed, for spells of learning greater than three weeks 44% of relevant respondents said that the employer had asked the employee to stay on in employment in view of the investment being made in them. Nevertheless employees in general appear to accept or tolerate a high degree of employer control.

Deep questions of policy arise from this structure of workforce learning. For example:

- it militates against the securing of full qualifications and the greater mobility of labour which that would bring;

- in general it does not assign a large role to the individual preferences of employees or encourage joint decision taking between employer and employee to general advantage. This loss of mutuality is a significant economic inefficiency in the system;

- there is room also to question the extent to which training effort is devoted to those who already have qualifications and high skills. Is this a rational economic pattern for employer investment in learning?;

- it militates against developing a broadly based learning culture in a company, and the building up of basic skills amongst the workforce as a whole;

- equally perplexing for the policy makers is the fact that in the smaller companies the amount of workforce learning is very small indeed. Since small companies have been regarded as the main net creator of jobs in the British economy in recent years, it is a source of considerable concern that vocational education and training is such a hit and miss affair amongst the smaller employers.

Understanding the structure of learning activities is therefore an important task. In this connection it would be illuminating to compare the make up of workforce learning in Britain with other countries. Do other countries which have strong dependence upon employer funding for workforce learning have a similar structure of learning? Or do they have practices and policies which produce a different balance and spread of activity?

Market failure

As well as being understood, the British system needs to be assessed for its overall results. It is a system which, although devoted strongly to job specific learning investment, still produces skill shortages which set in early in any economic recovery, and still leaves many British companies searching for stronger competitiveness in international trade. In recent years there has been an emerging consensus in Britain that there has been a **substantial market failure** in vocational education and learning arrangements.

It has been held for example that:

a) employers have for many years been inclined to take an unduly short term view of investment in learning amongst their employees. Training expenditures have been the first things to be cut in times of economic downturn. Relatively high interests rates have also left their mark in squeezing the funds available for training;

b) employers are reluctant to invest in vocational education and learning for fear of 'poaching'. Employers have little or no property rights in investments in learning. It must be a concern for the employer if the result of investing in an employee's knowledge and skill is that the employee leaves for a job elsewhere;

c) British firms have traditionally not created a strong learning culture on the shop floor. Identification of skill needs is therefore less efficient than it need be;

d) the proportion of employees with undeclared serious deficiencies in core skills of literacy and numeracy reflecting earlier failures in the full time education system - has seriously hampered employers in developing more flexible work practices;

e) wage differentials and other tangible rewards available to employees as a result of acquiring and practising new levels of skill have not always produced a sufficient incentive for the individual worker to seek participation in new learning;

f) the national system of qualifications has been chaotic and uncoordinated and much of the learning financed by employers has not achieved certification and recognition;

workers with clearly recognised endowments of skill and knowledge have not been able to move around the economy with the flexibility and efficiency which a fully applied system of modern qualifications should bring.

Factors of this kind go some way towards explaining why in the late 1980s, only a third of employers in the Training in Britain survey could report an experience of vocational education and training in the previous three years. The volumes of learning have been inadequate, and the volumes achieved have not been obtained in a manner which greatly facilitates flexible allocation and reallocation of labour resources between competing uses.

Some secular improvements

Happily there are some signs that improved practices are percolating through the British system.

There is, for example, some evidence in the recently published Employment in Britain Survey that total participation in workforce learning may have been rising fairly rapidly in the last few years. It could be that the participation rate is now around 50% rather than the third quoted above. This same survey also shows how greater innovation - mainly in the form of IT-based processes - has been sweeping through much of British industry and commerce, generating a demand for updating of skills.

There is also some evidence that the well established fact of training expenditures turning down in recession may now be giving way to a greater robustness in employers' training budgets. According to the Labour Force Survey, vocational learning has held up well in the recent recession. This could be evidence that employers are more willing these days to compete on the basis of workforce skill and quality. If so, that is good news for learning in and around the workplace.

There is also a much greater involvement by employers in learning and education at all levels.

The colleges in Britain are now much more commercial in their approach, and anxious to build new markets with employers in their areas.

Importantly there is now some evidence, again in the Employment in Britain survey, to support the view that the fear of 'poaching', which has been used to explain a good deal of the under-investment in learning by British employers, may now be less powerful in the modern economy. There has been a secular trend towards 'flatter' structures of organisation in British companies. In these circumstances employers quickly discover that if they have inadequate learning policies they find it difficult to get good people to join their companies. It is not that employers are worrying only about people leaving their employ. Over a run of time they have to balance the 'ins' and the 'outs'. It is increasingly held that overall the learning company can normally establish a stronger workforce and a stronger competitive position in the market place with lower staff turnover than an employer who does no training or arranges no learning for fear of losing existing employees. If this is true it is indeed a helpful trend.

Specific acts of policy

Despite these indications of improvement, there is a long way to go, and the UK Government is still very seriously engaged in trying to make the workforce learning market operate more efficiently. Indeed that is the very essence of its policy overall. In recent years it has launched a number of very specific policies designed to improve the market further.

The cornerstones of its 'market forces' approach are several:

a) first of all the Government has almost completely abolished the **Industrial Training Board** (ITB) framework set up in the 1960s. This framework sought to overcome the

'market failure' of employers by means of levies on undertraining companies. These levies were backed by statutory provision, and were fed through to industrial training boards which supplied courses and opportunities for the particular industries concerned. The Government took the view that this system had failed. It was bureaucratic in practice, and removed the decisions about the supply of learning opportunities too far from the employers and the employees who were the customers. The ITBs have been replaced by non-statutory sectoral training bodies which facilitate training in their chosen sectors and industries on a voluntary basis;

b) the Government has set up a **new system of modern qualifications,** the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). These qualifications are formulated by Lead Industry Bodies, ie organisations of employers in each major industry, which define clearly what competences need to be build into qualifications. These modern qualifications are based upon 5 levels and at each level are divided into separate units. They are designed so that competence can be demonstrated and assessed in the workplace. The new qualifications are progressively replacing old vocational qualifications, and are now in principle available for over 80% of employment in Britain up to level 4 (technician level). Scotland has its own system which runs in parallel with the NVQs in England and Wales;

c) the Government has invested extensively in the development of **open and flexible learning** techniques. There is now a substantial industry of providers of low cost flexible learning materials;

d) in recent years the Government has been seeking to extend **quality-assured career advice and guidance** functions for adults. Such guidance is a prerequisite of an efficient learning market. Advice and guidance has been available free for school leavers by law. Adult provision on the other hand has been patchy and of variable standard, and has lacked State funding on any scale. In its new Gateways programme and the Skill Choice initiative the Government is working to develop a market in adult guidance through use of vouchers and new quality standards;

e) the Government has introduced new standards for employers, which will entitle employers to the **Investors** in **People** award. These are publicly assessed organisational and procedural standards which require that the employer should demonstrate a clear link between the economic objectives of the company or organisation and the training of individual employees, and that the organisation should also demonstrate the ability of the employer to involve the employees creatively in training or learning arrangements. The Government is seeking to encourage employers to commit themselves to these standards throughout the economy;

f) the Government has set up **national targets for volume achievements in education and training,** both for young people and for adults. These national targets set demanding medium term goals for the nation to achieve. They can serve as a benchmark against which the product and efficiency of the total learning market in Britain can be measured;

g) finally, the Government has created new **Training and Enterprise Councils** to serve as its delivery arm in localities and regions throughout England, Wales and Scotland. These Training and Enterprise Councils (TECS) are private companies which contract with the Government to deliver the Government's training programmes for young people and unemployed people and to pursue a large number of local initiatives in training and economic development. These TECs (known as LECs in Scotland) are managed by leading business people, who can apply the resources which they obtain from Government to the local economy in ways which reflect the needs of the local economy. The system of TECs and LECs was introduced in 1990 and now serves to underpin the whole set of 'market forces' policies being pursued by the Government.

This list of key policy initiatives envisions a free and flexible market place in vocational education and learning, where the bulk of resources to support demand are raised by employers and individuals, and where the public intervention primarily consists of oiling the wheels of the market process.

Will it work?

A key question then for this Conference is whether this reliance upon improving market processes rather than on intervention or State funding is working, and will work in the future to produce greater competitiveness and more efficient allocation of labour in the British economy. I would like to demonstrate the answer with yet more facts. But the truth is that many of the interventions listed above are still new, and it will take several more years for them to be fully deployed. it is therefore not possible to measure success fully at this stage.

What I can do is offer the thought that the policy as a whole is consistent and logical and that conditions for its success are now more propitious that any time in recent years. Indeed it is fair to observe that, on the basis of voluntaristic policies, the training agenda is rising in Britain and that with over 100 TECs and LECs spread across the whole of Great Britain there is now a much clearer focus than ever before of minds and hearts towards producing a learning outcome for Britain which will fit its status as a major trading economy.

While we are waiting for longer term answers to emerge, things are not of course standing still. For example, the Government is already taking steps to broaden the whole system of modern qualifications to create more options for learners. A new kind of qualification, the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), is being introduced to fill the gap between academic qualifications and national vocational qualifications. Work is also going on in Government and in discussion with TECs on a new strategy to make the vocational learning system more user friendly to customers, be they individuals or employers. Stronger customer rights, wider use of vouchers to translate State funding into individual purchasing, and developments in own finance and individual tax relief are all part of this approach.

Within industry there is also keen interest in the development by large companies of employee development schemes for non-work related learning led by employees funded by transfer of resources from the employer which can serve to develop a learning culture amongst employees who previously may have been antipathetic to further learning. This is an exciting development, strongly encouraged by the Government.

Within the world of higher education and further education there is now considerable interest in developing credit accumulation and transfer system which will help people to learn progressively and to switch between one course and another more readily.

Important also are developments in APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) which is a key to bringing into the light of day skills which are latent and unrecognised in the workforce and amongst people seeking to return to employment.

Much of this emerging agenda fits in very well with the non-interventionist policies promoted by the Employment Department. Some of it would wither on the vine if the more interventionist route should be taken.

For those therefore who argue that there should be greater State intervention in workforce learning, through new State funded entitlements or levies or taxes or enforced saving for learning purposes the burden of proof becomes progressively harder. They would have to demonstrate that the financial problems of greater State intervention, and the bureaucratic problems of new directive mechanisms can be solved in such a way as to produce a better result than this widening display of market-based policies. It will be for the Conference to take a view on the chances of that.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UAW-FORD LIFE/EDUCATION PLANNING PROGRAMME: AN EIGHT YEAR PERSPECTIVE

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THE UAW-FORD LIFE/EDUCATION PLANNING PROGRAMME: AN EIGHT YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

This paper focuses on an educational advising programme for automotive workers which is jointly sponsored by the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Ford Motor Company. This programme, the *UAW-Ford Life/Education Planning Programme* (L/EPP) is one of the worker-education and development programmes under the umbrella of the UAW-Ford Education Development and Training Programme (EDTP). Throughout this paper the acronym EDTP and the term 'adult education' are used synonymously to refer to the educational programmes for UAW-represented Ford employees. The EDTP Programme is administered through the UAW-Ford National Education, Development and Training Centre (NEDTC), referred to in this paper as the 'National Centre.'

The Life/Education Planning Programme is unique in that the National Centre contracted the University of Michigan (UM) to recruit, hire and manage a cadre of *full-time* Life/Education Advisors (LEAs) who were placed in Ford locations throughout the United States.
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The Life/Education Planning Programme is fundamental to EDTP. It provides a proactive stimulus in the form of LEAs who advise workers at plant sites about adult education and personal development. The UM employs and manages the LEAs, who are the on-site agents of the Life/Education Planning Programme. The L/EPP Programme is nested within the EDTP Programme which is administered by the National Centre.

Background

Over the past 15 years, global competition, technological advancement and changes in the economy have had a powerful impact in the workplace. In response to these sweeping changes, one of the potentially most far-reaching innovations in industrial relations in the United States has been the development of joint programmes between labour and management (Hoyman & Ferman, 1991).

In 1982, the UAW and the Ford Motor Company negotiated an agreement that included the establishment of the Education Development Training Programme, EDTP, the first education and development programme of its kind to be jointly administered by the UAW and Ford. At that time the auto industry was in the midst of a severe recession. From 1978 to 1982 the US hourly workforce at Ford dropped from a peak of just over 200,000 to about 100,000 (Tomasko & Dickinson, 1991). Therefore, the early focus of the EDTP Programme was

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The author acknowledges the profound contributions made by Jeanne P. Gordus, who directed this project at the University of Michigan from 1985 until her death in 1990. The author wishes to recognise the contributions of the UM L/EPP staff, particularly Karen Yamakawa and Jim Hagerman. The project has been supported by the UAW-Ford National Education, Development and Training Center, with the co-operation of the UAW-Ford staff, LEAs and UAW-represented Ford employees.

almost exclusively on the needs of laid-off workers. But as the industry rebounded from recession, initiatives were taken to address the needs of active workers.

The Life/Education Planning Programme was developed and launched in 1985 to serve the needs of active employees. It was developed by the National Centre in collaboration with Jeanne Gordus at the University of Michigan. The key link between this programme and the umbrella EDTP Programme is the Life/Education Advisor or LEA. These education professionals, hired by the University of Michigan and placed on location, provide educational advising and assistance to workers. While the University of Michigan is the LEAs' employer, direct functional supervision of their on-site programme work is provided in-plant by joint EDTP committees. These committees are chaired jointly by two CO-chairs, a UAW representative and a company representative who oversee and direct EDTP activities.

The EDTP Context

The EDTP Programme focuses on individual worker interests, personal goals and the educational opportunities available to meet those personal goals. It gives workers an opportunity to enhance their skills and undertake a wide variety of courses of their own choosing. The EDTP Programme has many characteristics in common with other UAW-Ford joint efforts including: local training committees, voluntary worker participation, local programme flexibility and national support. The programme is funded under the collective bargaining agreement by company contributions based on the number of hours worked by UAW-represented hourly workers (Tomasko & Dickinson, 1991).

Components of the EDTP Programme include the:

(1) Life/Education Planning Programme
(2) Education Training and Assistance Plan
(3) Skills Enhancement Programme
(4) College and University Options Programme
(5) Successful Retirement Planning Programme
(6) Financial Education Programme and
(7) Targeted Education, Training or Counselling Projects.

New programmes are added from time to time. (For a detailed description of the EDTP Programmes and the structure of the National Centre, see Tomasko & Dickinson, 1991.)

The EDTP Program was designed to remove many of the barriers to adult education faced by workers returning to school. Most costs were eliminated by the educational benefit available to each worker which is renewed annually. Travel time was eliminated by conducting classes on-site. However, workers must attend classes in their own time. Educational advising and assistance is provided by the LEA and the programme is focused solely on workers' own development. It is important to note that EDTP Programs co-exist with, but do not replace or necessarily complement, company sponsored training programs. The Company continues to provide job-related training to workers. The EDTP Program was developed for the express purpose of helping workers improve their lives and well-being through education, in whatever way they may choose.

Life/Education Advisors

While the EDTP Program is worker driver and focused solely on what the workers need and want, the Life/Education Advisors are at its hub. LEAs are proactive in promoting education to workers, assessing workers' needs and helping them to set life goals which can be met through participation in education and personal development courses. Their major responsibilities include:

(1) providing educational advising
(2) conducting workshops
(3) providing educational information
(4) making referrals and follow-up and
(5) assisting the local EDTP committee in managing the programme on-site.

Advising and Social Support

LEAs are at the interface between the programme and the worker. They provide the human touch. They are advisors and helpers, often friends and confidants for workers returning to education or struggling to stick with courses. Much of their work involves helping workers navigate the complexity of the educational arena. However, they also provide that element of social support which some workers may need in order to take the 'leap of faith' into adult education.

LEAs report that their most satisfying moments come through personal contact with the people that they serve. Below are comments from some workers about their LEAs:

'Our Life/Education Advisor has been an inspiration to me. She is there for support and encouraging employees to participate in the Education, Development and Training Program.'

'Earning my degree was touch and go. I could not have made it without the help of the AUW-Ford Education, Development and Training Program and my friend the LEA.'

Gordus, Kuo & Yamakawa (1991) conducted research into the social support phenomenon alluded to in these comments. A study was 'designed to investigate whether a social-support agent, the LEA, could influence individuals to participate in adult education at higher rates than would be observed .... where appraisal and informational and emotional assistance were not provided' (p 163). The results of the study confirmed that LEAs do function as agents of social support and that this has a positive impact on worker participation in adult education.

Over an eight-year history of the Life/Education Planning Programme, worker participation in adult education has increased dramatically. LEAs have played a crucial role in stimulating that participation. Further studies (Employment Transition Programme, 1991) found that:

* on average, workers make four visits to an LEA during their participation in the programme.

* the rate of participation in adult education is 2.4 times higher for workers advised by LEAs than those who do not get such assistance.

* most workers (98%) said that LEAs met or exceeded their expectations for support and assistance.

Instrumental Assistance

One of the primary roles of LEAs is to minimise situational and institutional barriers faced by workers re-entering the world of education. This means that in addition to their educational advising role, LEAs have another more structured, instrumental role. LEAs arrange with local educational institutions to bring courses *on-site* so that workers can conveniently take a course immediately before or after work. They co-ordinate educational offerings and flexible class schedules and conduct on-site course registration. They promote education and become a primary source of information by providing workers educational information about course offerings and institutional procedures. In addition, LEAs also collect information from employees about their interests and educational needs. This information is then used in planning for courses which are responsive to those interests and needs.

LEA Profile

Typically, LEAs have completed bachelors degrees or masters degrees. Over 88% of the LEAs have four-year college degrees. Over 45% have master's degrees and many are currently enrolled in programmes to enhance their own education. They have strong educational backgrounds, a high degree of interpersonal skills, excellent communication skills, previous experience in adult education and have familiarity with the admissions practices and procedures of local schools, colleges and agencies.

Hiring and Training

LEA recruitment and hiring through the University of Michigan is a comprehensive eight-week process which culminates in a final hiring recommendation being made by the joint EDTP committee at the location to which the LEA will be assigned. A three-week training programme provides new LEAs with a comprehensive overview of the EDTP programmes that they will be asked to promote, an understanding of the culture of joint programmes and a review of policies and procedures. The training also prepares new LEAs to work with their local EDTP committees in providing service to workers.

The Range of Educational Offerings

Educational opportunities for workers span a wide spectrum of courses including hands-on courses; basic mathematics, reading and writing; preparation for high school general equivalency degree (GED) test; two-year college degrees; four-year college degrees; and master's degrees. Examples of the array of options made available to workers through the

EDTP Programme are listed here. This is not intended to be a comprehensive listing but an overview of typical offerings:

Computers (PCs):	Assembly and Maintenance, Computer Awareness, Computer Repair, Introduction to DOS, Word Processing, PC Applications.
Credit Courses:	Algebra, Composition, Organisational Behaviour, Human Relations, Leadership.
Home Improvement:	Home Carpentry, Consumer Electronics, Home Plumbing, Home Wiring.
Self-Development:	Financial Education, Income Tax Preparation, Personal Success, Retirement Planning.
Skills Enhancement:	Math Enrichment, Reading, Writing and Spelling, English as a Second Language, GED Preparation.
Vocational Training:	Automotive Technology, Computer Integrated Manufacturing, Consumer Electronics, Floral Design, Furniture Finishing, Outboard Motor Repair, Small Engine Repair, TV Repair.

Overall Programme Results

In order to monitor the activity of its employees on location, the UM requires monthly reports from LEAs about their activity. These reports are reviewed by the UM staff, and feedback provided to LEAs when necessary. The report data are summarised and entered into a data base. Periodically, programme evaluation studies are conducted and reports provided to the National Centre. This data measures overall levels of LEA educational advising and course activity. Trends based on these data show a steady increase in worker participation over the life of the programme. The results below show levels of Life/Education Planning Programme activity across the entire UAW-Ford system in the United States. The data are summarised for the last calendar year, 1992, and cumulative totals provided from August 1985 through April 1993.

Item Description	Calendar 1992	August 1985 - April 1993
* Number of on-site classes conducted	2,749	11,147
* Enrolments in on-site classes	29,077	162,038
* Number of Worker/LEA advising contacts (includes initial and follow-up visits)	51,451	271,492
* Percentage of worker population advised by LEAs from August 1985 to April 1993		59%

Summary of Programme Evaluation Studies

Results of First Survey

In 1986, 7% of a population of about 20,000 workers in eight Ford plants were randomly selected. Of those selected, 932 participated in a telephone interview conducted by the University of Michigan. The purpose f the survey was to determine the effect of the educational advising programme on worker participation in adult education. Four of the plants had LEAs and four did not. The results showed that worker participation in adult education programmes was 5.4% in the four plants without LEAs vs. 10.7% in the four plants that had LEAs. In addition, in those plants that had LEAs the participation rate for those workers who never consulted an LEA was 6.7%, whereas the participation rate for those workers who had consulted an LEA was 36.8% (UAW-Ford NEDTC, 1989). Using these dame data, this improved causal relationship between LEA contact and worker participation was later confirmed using structural equation modelling (Gordus, et al, 1991; Gordus, Kuo, Yamakawa & Toronto, 1993).

Gordus, et al (1993) also found that workers' prior level of education was not related to their participation in education programmes. However, prior education did increase the likelihood of contacting an LEA. They concluded that prior education level appears to motivate workers to seek out educational advising which indirectly leads to their participation in education programmes. They also found that contact with LEAs reduces workers' internal barriers to education making it easier for them to participate in adult education programmes. A measure of internal barriers was created from workers' responses to two survey items:

(1) it is just too hard to go to school while working, and
(2) it takes too much time from home and family.

Results of Second Survey

A second survey was conducted in 1989. This second survey assessed the impact of educational programmes on workers' personal lives, families and the Transition Programme (1991). The results show that an overwhelming majority of respondents said that their participation in educational programmes, through EDTP, had a positive impact on their attitude toward education, had a positive effect in the workplace and had a positive influence

on their children. When asked to respond to specific questions the workers answered as follows:

* 95% said that education improved their lives.
* 93% agreed that education should continue throughout their lives.
* 93% reported that EDTP had improved educational opportunity in the plant.
* 88% said that joint union-company efforts were very helpful.
* 72% reported that their motivation was to be good role-models for their children.
* 70% said that their participation made their children take school more seriously.

Integenerational Effect

The last two findings along with an accumulation of anecdotal information have stimulated interest in a potential 'intergenerational effect', ie an effect of worker participation in adult education on their children. A pilot study of this intergenerational effect is in progress and a larger field study will be proposed. Using data collected from both parents and children, this study will examine:

1. worker participation in adult education
2. parenting styles
3. parent child communication
4. the influence of peer groups and
5. background variables.

The study will also look at the effects that parents' participation may have on children's

1. study habits
2. intent to stay in school
3. mastery of the educational process and
4. school performance.

The following two stories are examples that parents have shared demonstrating the apparent effect on children (Employment Transition Programme, 1991).

'I have had a great deal of support at home. My wife has been ever encouraging, my son's grades have improved in school (we study together) and my daughter has now decided to add a teaching degree to her other training.'

'The availability of the education and classes in the plant have certainly changed my life. My daughter, also a high school dropout, had been inspired by my successes and is nearing completion of her GED.'

Trends and Pattern Study

Another study was conducted to assess whether there is a 'first time' effect, as many workers had reported. it was observed that if workers get past the hurdle of taking a first course, they seem to get hooked on education and continue taking additional courses. Using monthly

report data from LEAs, an analysis of worker/LEA discussions was conducted. It was found that workers who come to see an LEA to discuss *one-and-only one* educational programme on the first visit, quickly expand their horizons to include discussion of another programmes on subsequent visits. This study provides the first preliminary evidence for a first time effect (Toronto, Yamakawa, Iburi & Hagerman, 1993).

How it all goes together

Three major organisations (UAW, Ford, UK) with differing primary missions, found common ground for collaborative work, ie the personal well-being and educational development of industrial workers. The association between a major labour union, a large automotive company and a large public University has been rewarding over the eight years of its existence. This complex relationship is based on a common commitment to improve the lives of workers, specifically UAW-represented Ford workers. This relationship grew out of the concept of union-company jointism, a concept which in turn grew out of the necessity for economic survival in the 1970s and early 1980s. The programme requires of the people that run it a clear understanding of the concept of joint ventures between Union and Company. (An excellent overview of jointism and union company joint training programmes can be found in Ferman, Hoyman & CutcherGershenfeld, 1990).

Working Relationships

The successful operation and administration of the Life/Education Planning Programme requires the management of a complex set of relationships from three differing perspectives:

(1) the university
(2) the National Centre and
(3) the LEA.

The complexity of the working relationships between active parties in this joint effort should not be underestimated. These relationships demand continuous attention and nourishment, as a regular part of the administration and operation of the programme.

The University's Life/Education Planning Programme team must manage four primary relationships:

(1) those with the L/EPP team at the National Centre which is geographically removed from the University
(2) the LEAs in the field who are also geographically removed from the University
(3) the indirect relationship with the Co-chairs of the in-plant, joint EDTP committees who share in the supervision of the LEAs and
(4) the administrative relationships within the University itself.

The National Centre's L/EPP team manages four primary relationships:

(1) the UM L/EPP team which is geographically removed
(2) direct programmatic relationship with the LEAs in geographically removed locations
(3) indirect relationship with joint EDTP Co-chairs at the plant site and
(4) internal relationships within the National Centre.

Now the LEAs must be aware of and manage five primary relationships:

(1) the University and its requirements
(2) the National Centre and its requirements
(3) the joint EDTP Co-chairs and their requirements
(4) relationships with local schools, colleges and other providers who bring courses on-site and
(5) *above all*, their relationships with the workers whom they serve and for those benefit this entire structure has been built.

The development of the Life/Education Planning Programme required the commitment of everyone from three diverse, highly structured institutions. They had to shed traditional thinking about organisational philosophy and structure and create a coalition of people, accountable to different organisations, that could step outside the bounds of their organisations and work in a joint relationship to achieve a common goal. In human terms alone, this was no small task. But it has been achieved. This is a truly unique arrangement and the Learning/Education Planning Programme has been a very successful experimental venture.

Summary and Conclusion

The UAW-Ford NEDTC, which was created under a union-company negotiated agreement in 1982, contracted with the University of Michigan to deliver educational advising services to UAW-represented Ford workers in 1985. This was done when it became apparent that establishing the EDTP Programme and making its resources available to workers did not ensure that they would take advantage of them. Hence, under the auspices of the Life/Education Planning Programme, the role of the on-side advisor, the LEA, was established.

The Life/Education Planning Programme is in the forefront of labour/industry/education co-operation and co-ordination. It was the firs of its kind spanning three different fields of endeavour. Each step required thoughtful problem solving, planning and implementation. The key to success includes the following factors:

* focus on the individual interests and goals of workers
* provide workers with the resources and means to achieve their goals
* involve union, company and university people in *all* aspects of the programme.
* place highly-qualified, well-trained LEAs on-site to provide workers professional guidance.
* develop relationships with education and training organisations to bring courses on-site.

The integration of these basic elements resulted in a programme which had a positive effect on the personal lives of UAW-represented Ford workers in a relatively short period of time.

The Life/Education Planning Programme has been, and continues to be, a very exciting experience for those involved in it. For the University, it has been an exceptional opportunity to conduct research while implementing an educational advising programme. Research studies have explored questions of significance to the programme and tested hypotheses of value to the fields of education and social science. Since similar workplace education is just beginning to expand into other industries, its full effect on the education and development of the labour force and its full impact on the field of education, the social sciences and public policy are not yet clearly understood. The breadth and depth of these programmes is yet to be determined.

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CHAPTER THREE

WORKPLACE LEARNING AND REDESIGN INITIATIVES IN SWITZERLAND

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

WORKPLACE LEARNING AND REDESIGN INITIATIVES IN SWITZERLAND

Introduction

The question of 'what we owe one another as members of the same society who no longer inhabit the same economy'[3] has only recently come into focus in Switzerland. Long sheltered from high unemployment rates, declining real wages, and many of the social ills that have plagued other industrial nations in the last decade, Switzerland is experiencing a rude awakening. Unemployment has grown from less than 1% to almost 5% within the last three years (a figure not reached since 1939), bankruptcies are at an all time high. While some (often smaller) companies are going out of business, a number of big companies are reporting record profits achieved with fewer employees. At the same time, manufacturing jobs are being moved to low-wage countries. Business circles blame high wages and too much government regulation as a major reason for the economic troubles facing Switzerland. This is the very same problem definition that Reaganomics in the US was built on in the Eighties, trying to remedy the decline of the American manufacturing industry with tax cuts for the wealthy, demands for wage concessions, union busting, and deregulation of competition which led to growing income disparities and a declining standard of living for a large part of American workers. Others voices here demand a redistribution of work (ie. shorter work week), along with increased public and private investments in the creation of jobs and in employee skill and competence development. The challenge of developing a learning workforce in this perspective is therefore closely connected with the goal of reducing unemployment and maintaining a decent standard of living for the working population.

As suggested by the concepts and projects described below, the focus of this workshop is on workplace learning initiatives that are closely tied to questions of how work activities are organised and how competence development can be supported rather than on courses or programs offered in the workplace that bear no immediate relationship to the reality of a person's everyday work activities.

Different characteristics of the Swiss economic, social, cultural and industrial relations context tend to support or inhibit the development and widespread implementation of workplace learning and competence development initiatives.

Among the factors that work in favour of such projects are:

* an export dependent economy which, in order to preserve existing relatively high wages and still remain competitive, has to provide high value-added quality products and services
* a growing awareness that 'the workplace Switzerland' remains viable only if it can draw on a competent and highly qualified workforce
* a sound basic education system and a well-developed vocational training structure complemented by technical colleges and university level education programs.

Among the inhibiting factors are:

* certain aspects of the Swiss industrial relations system such as the lack of co-determination
* legislation that would grant unions influence in decision-making about the introduction of new technology and changes in work organisation, declining union membership, a traditional labour union focus on wages and narrowly defined issues of working conditions,

[3] R Reich. **The Work of Nations.** New York: Vintage Books, 1992 (p 303).

* a generally conservative attitude and scepticism toward change as evidenced in the recent vote in Switzerland against joining the European Economic Zone, - the current recession and rising unemployment figures which, while increasing the pressure for change, at the same time create fear and reluctance to experiment with and invest in work reorganisation projects at the firm level.

Adult learning and competence development concepts

The underlying assumption informing the concepts of adult learning and competence development of interest here is that human development is a lifelong process in which people continue to change their beliefs and values, adding to their store of knowledge and skills as long as they encounter new experiences in pursuit of various life goals and interests. Competence therefore is not some specific type of knowledge or a set of skills or abilities. Rather it is defined as a person's capability to organise and effectively use cognitive, social and behavioural skills to achieve his/her goals. Since most adults spend a large portion of their day engaged in work activity, the design of work experiences and tasks can either enhance opportunities for learning or inhibit such learning potential, depending on the specific features that characterise a person 's work.

The process of individual and collective competence development is intertwined with social or systematic changes. Mastering new competencies thus requires more than education and training, but needs to include changes in tasks and social relationships, as well as in communication, co-operation and influence patterns in the workplace. As learning is translated into behavioural competencies through practice, competence development requires the active participation in the learning and redesign process that allows people to gain insight into the nature of technical and organisational interdependencies between their work and the work of others. It also implies influence over the outcomes of such change processes to assure that such changes are in line with their basic interests[4].

In the context of the project initiatives discussed below that address the relationship between technological/organisational redesign, and changes in work organisation and employee competence development, the socio-technical system theory concept of the joint optimisation of the technical and social system is of importance. Changes in work organisation are aimed at team-based work forms oriented toward:

* activation through task orientation (meaningful work activities that allow for self-reliance and co-operation and provide opportunities for new learning, etc.)

* self-regulation (having the resources and competence to solve problems where they occur)

* appropriate interdependence of individual tasks (relationships to sub-activities are obvious, co-ordination within the group is assigned to the group, etc.).

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4 For a more extensive discussion of the theoretical basis and practical principles of adult learning and competence development through the active participation in work design activities, see F. Frei, M.. Hugentobler, S.J. Schurman, A. Alioth, and W. Duell, **Work Design for the Competent Organization.** Westport, CT: Quorum Books, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1993

The design of individual work activities is to be guided by the two principles of variable and developmental job design[5]. The first principle takes the existence of differing preferences into account, that is, the possibility for the individual to choose among more individual or group-based activities, more or less responsibility and more or less demanding work activities. The second principle is based on a developmental perspective that assumes that a person's needs and preferences may change over time and that work assignments and demands should be re-evaluated periodically in co-operation with the individual.

These concepts and principles of competence development and work organisation are extensively discussed in the publications by Eberhard Ulich and his collaborators[6] at the Institute of Work Psychology of the Federal Technical University in Zurich, who have been involved in various roles in the project initiatives described below.

Project Initiatives

While employee learning and competence development is a central aspect in the projects and case studies discussed here, they have different goal foci and involve different actors and different levels of intervention.

1. The CIM Action Program

The CIM Action Program was launched in August of 1990, following a policy and funding decision by the Swiss legislature and Federal Council (highest level executive body). The broad goal of this initiative is to strengthen the competitiveness of small and medium size firms in Swiss industry by means of supporting the design, planning and implementation of future-oriented, technologically advanced production systems and structures while simultaneously fostering qualification and competence development through educational institutions as well as at the firm level. The publicly-funded project duration is six years.

Though more than 50% of the Swiss production companies are currently utilising various components of computer integrated systems in production planning and material handling, design and manufacturing, a variety of problems is surfacing in conjunction with the introduction of these new technologies. A survey of 900 firms indicated that, while the most frequently mentioned single problem item related to difficulties with the technology itself, 88% of the responding firms mentioned problems with aspects of work organisation, employee qualification, acceptance of technological change, etc. The fact that 85% of the firms report no changes in work organisation structures, independent of weather they recently introduced computer integrated system components, suggests the prevalence of technology-oriented concepts focused on the acquisition of new technologies rather than on the joint optimisation of technology and work organisation structures[7]. A number of such projects have acquired an unflattering reputation as 'CIM ruins'.

The CIM project is to address the following problems the lack of qualified employees at all levels, the lack of concepts and practice-oriented, proven design models for organisational restructuring that integrates the introduction of computer-based systems at the interface of

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5 E. Ulich, **Psychologie der Arbeit. Management-Enzyklopadie, Band 7**, 1984, Landsberg: Moderne Industrie (pp 914-929

6 For an overview of the work of F Ulicii and his many collaborators (dedicated to F Ulich on the occasion of his 60th birthday), see: F Frei und I. Udris. (Hrsg.) **Das Bild der Arbeit**. Bern/Stuttgart/Toronto Verlag Hans Huber, 1990.

7 E. Ulich und H. Schupbach. **CIM in der Schweiz - Konzepte und Analysen**, Technische Runcschau, Bern:Hallwlag. 1991.

human needs, work organisation and technology It is aimed at the optimisation of human performance (work activity, competence), technology and organisation. The project is an as yet unique joint effort by the national and state governments, interested firms as well as technical colleges and universities. It involves the creation of seven regional CIM education and consulting centres linked to a network of close to 100 vocational and technical colleges including universities, a large number of collaborating firms as well as contacts to various business and labour associations. The activities of the CIM education and training centres for the three-year start-up phase (1990-1992) are funded at a level of 91.5 million Swiss francs, the lion share of which comes from the federal (39%) and state governments (49%). The three program components are: continuing education, praxis-based research and development as well as technology transfer.

The CIM Centres are independent regional organisations each with a somewhat different technology focus. Their key activities so far encompass:

* Development of education and training modules to be integrated in the curricula of technical colleges' post-graduate courses for technical and engineering professional and for graduates of vocational apprenticeships.

* Seminars and information workshops for managers and technical experts of small and medium size firms aimed at information and technology transfer and the active long-term involvement of these participants.

* Pilot projects in selected firms focused on the design and simulation of implementing various CIM components

* Technology transfer through the collaboration of industry experts and university personnel in courses, seminars as well as consulting activities with individual firms.

* Selected research projects partly with an international component involving the Europe-wide research and development network.

Preliminary assessment:

While it is too early to evaluate the success and impact of this project, informed observers/participants offer the following comments:

Positive developments:

* Broadening perspectives and a more interdisciplinary focus in the training and education of technical experts (various engineering functions) and managers at the university level. For examples The Federal Technical Institute has added to its engineering education departments (with a traditional technical focus) a curriculum for production management; the management training curriculum at another university now includes more technical know-how. (This is particularly relevant as many Swiss firms have a reputation for manufacturing good products and for effective product development processes, but often have problems with work flow and work process integration and qualification development).

* The CIM program strengthens the links between technical colleges and vocational training institutions and industry (integration of theory and practice) and introduces important work psychology concepts and principles of participatory approaches to work organisation and competence development.

* Even though there is great variation, some excellent continuation education modules have been developed and are experimented with at some colleges.

Difficulties and limitations:

* There is growing pressure from industry on educational institutions, however, many firms focus too much on technology transfer at the expense of a more integrated, systemic perspective of organisational change.

* The number of truly innovative change projects is very small. in part because such projects would require the questioning of traditional organisational structures and the existing distribution of authority and control.

2. The QUBI Project

Impetus and goals

This is a five-year project initiated by the Swiss metal and watchmaking industry workers union (SMUV) that has been funded by the federal government within the broad framework of the CIM Action Program described above. It has its origin in the union's concern that the regional CIM centres might pay insufficient attention to questions of the quality of worklife and social innovation in organisational restructuring processes and that, without additional funding, the union's existing structure and resources would be insufficient to play an active role in the broader CIM initiative The QUBI project started in the fall of 1991. Its goals are to develop competence and knowledge among rank-and-file and firm-based work council members as well as union representatives on questions of social/organisational and technological innovations in order to be able to develop their own proposals for the design and implementation of such innovation projects at the firm level. The focus is on the development of documentation, guidelines and instruments that allow for the analysis of the relationships between work organisation, technology and employee competence development.

Context: work organisation structures in small and medium size firms.

95% of Swiss firms are of small or medium size (less than 1 00 employees), employing 2/3 of the Swiss workforce, Changing market conditions, changing social values and world-wide competition present major challenges to these firms (abbreviated KMUs). KMUs have to respond to these changes. throughput times need to be shortened, inventory has to be reduced, major capital investments are made in computer integrated manufacturing and other high-tech equipment.

Activities and focus

In order to provide answers in support of the development of KMUs the QUBI team focused its initial analysis on the work organisation and work flow structures in selected KMUs, based on the conviction that only those firms who will be successful in fully utilising the potential of their employees have a chance for long-term survival, and that motivated employees are a key ingredient toward this goal. One conclusion of this analysis is that KMUs attempt to remain or to become 'transparent', which means that everybody down to the shop floor knows and is able to influence who plans, executes and controls the production process at what point in time- Results and conclusions from these analyses have been published in the QUBI 'Workshop Report 1'. It is hoped that these findings will influence the CIM Action Program to better respond to the needs and requests of KMUs.

Group-based forms of work organisation are viewed as having great potential in the future. Workshop Report 1 concluded that employees in many firms are confronted with very complex work structures and considerable task variety. This leads to an uneven distribution of job demands which are too high for some individuals and too low for others. Employee motivation is hampered by this problem. Group based work organisation can help address this problem as it contributes to reducing the time required for co-ordination and logistics tasks. Group problem-solving at the point where problems occur supports synergistic effects and

motivation which in turn increases productivity and decreases absenteeism. What is required is a change in leadership paradigms, a new organisational culture. While the focus in the past was on investments in new technologies, processes and materials, group work puts the development of human potential and skill at the core of investment decisions. Jointly with work groups, a new foundation of trust has to be developed that allows for the shift of work demands, rights and the means to accomplish the tasks to the group. Innovative self-regulation is premised on communication and co-operation across groups and open information that is available and accessible whenever needed. The goal is to test these propositions in practical pilot projects by the end of 1993 and to present the results and experiences in a short manual (Workshop Report 2).

Employee participation in innovation projects: Also by the end of 1993, QUBI plans to make tools and techniques, consulting options, check lists, questionnaires, network contacts, as well as sample contractual agreements available to work councils and employee representatives in small and medium size firms. These materials are to take into account relevant aspects of Swiss labour-management relations, labour law as well as the limited staff resources of KMUS- Employee participation is to be addressed, organised and assured at three levels; at the level of work councils (supported by the unions), at the level of project groups (with representatives of the departments affected) as well as through the direct involvement of the employees affected by innovation projects.

The integration of already existing experiences in other European countries, consultation on ongoing projects as well as advice to work councils and employee representatives will be the main focus on this topic. But the end of the year, a first documentation folder for innovation projects in KMUs should be available.

QUBI support services and goals for the next years

* Existing know-how and project findings will be tested and implemented in a simulated 'model enterprise' which is currently being developed. Ideally this will be complemented by a pilot project in a real' firm

* By 1996 a self-supporting innovation consulting service should be in operation. able to provide competent advice and consultation on organisational innovation projects.

* Workshop and course curricula and materials, based on a modular structure which are currently being developed will be tested , and further improved with the goal of creating an integrated curriculum for the training of social innovation consultants by 1996.

* As of 1994 a documentation and service agency should be available In addition, important topics will be presented and discussed in the publication 'Working World'.

* The development process of the QUBI team itself will be made available in the form of flow-animation through publications and consulting.

3. Examples of successful workplace learning and competence development projects

In order to illustrate the potential of work reorganisation projects aimed at worker learning and competence development, two practical projects will be briefly described. In both of these projects, members of AOC, a Swiss consulting firm served as consultants. The owners/consultants of this firm all have been affiliated with the Institute of Work Psychology mentioned earlier where they worked in various research and teaching functions before AOC was founded.

The two cases selected illustrate that such change processes can improve organisational efficiency and productivity while simultaneously stimulating continuous learning and competence development. They also show that this type of approach can be used both in a traditional manufacturing context as well as in the public administration sector which is often viewed as more resistant to change and where productivity increases have generally lagged behind the manufacturing sector.

Alcatel STR: Bottom-up approach[8]

Context

Alcatel STR, formerly a subsidiary of ITT has a major manufacturing plant in a suburb of Zurich. At this facility a variety of electronic products, including telephone switchboards are produced. Changing market conditions increased the demand for flexibility in the assembly of custom-designed electronic printed boards (PBAs)- Management's goal was two-fold: to reduce throughput time from 45 to 10 days with the aid of increased automation (assembly robots) while simultaneously creating humane and more attractive jobs. Technological change was to be planned together with work reorganisation. In the existing production process, jobs were monotonous and required little thinking or training. Production workers in the department that was to be reorganised, were mostly female immigrant workers from Italy, Spain, Turkey and other countries, many of whom with little knowledge of the German language. This was not a big problem, as every woman was assigned her workplace, received

[8]A more detailed description of this case study is found in: F Frei, M Hugentobler, S.J. Schurman, A. Alioth, and W. Duell: **Work Design for the Competent Organization**.

the parts from her supervisor and repeated mostly the same work tasks all day long - such as, for example, bending tiny resistor wires to be inserted into circuit boards.

Process and outcomes

Phase 1: Preparation

In a two day seminar, supervisors and management representatives were introduced to the concept of socio-technical system design. Key outcome: the realisation that the new production process would have to be designed drawing on the expertise of the employees involved.

Phase 2: Introduction of employees to the project and the concept of participation

A group of 15-20 women were to become involved in the project, but 40 women volunteered to participate. Two project groups were formed to develop production system 1 and 2. Each system was to encompass material planning and preparation, assembly as well as testing.

Phase 3: Planning of the new production systems

In an intense working phase the groups developed a model for the future work organisation in which groups of five or six women would be in charge of complete assembly on an electronic printed board. This included internal task distribution. review of work order forms, preparation, various assembly steps as well as non-electronic testing. The hierarchical structure was changed with all groups reporting directly to the general supervisor. Previous front-line supervisors became advisors with an instructional and trouble shooting role rather than a direct control function.

The Metaplan technique was used to document the planning process: ideas and problems related to various aspects of the reorganisation were listed, then regrouped. Photocopies of the pinboards were distributed and served as protocols in preparation for the next meeting.

Phase 4: Implementation

Step-by-step implementation started in April 1988. While the project was implemented as planned a public log was kept about problems and unsatisfactory aspects as well as ideas for how to address the problems The evaluation meeting five months later showed various problems, for example: - when difficulties arose advisors as well as employees tended to revert to old patterns, eg. women called the advisors when problems occurred instead of experimenting with solutions as a group, advisors interfered too much with the groups. Team development training supported the handling of internal conflicts.

As the women's competence increased, the advisors' problems with their new function intensified. They had difficulties abandoning the old supervisory role. These problems were discussed in additional meetings with advisors and led to new agreements about how they would allocate time to different functions.

Each woman received a training pass in the form of a binder which contained an overview of 27 instructional units, each encompassing several days of education and training. Each person decided when to sign up for which unit, thus pacing their own training. Increased qualifications provided access to more varied work tasks and higher pay. In semi-annual qualification assessments with supervisors new goals were set.

Production system 3, located in a small town in the western part of Switzerland was to be changed later. The women there were critical about the system developed in Zurich. An initial visit did not convince them of the merits of the 'Zurich approach.' Only after a second

trip involving discussions with the women in Zurich, were they willing to engage in a similar process, developing their own system, characterised by a slightly different workflow and organisational structure.

Evaluative comments and key lessons:

* The new production system achieved the desired goals regarding through put time reduction and quality standards , operating with the same number of employees. This led management to decide to proceed with a similar reorganisation process in other production areas,.

* The success of a workplace learning and competence development process is not dependent on an employee's previous skill and education level. Active involvement in work redesign and increased competence can have positive effects on self-esteem and self-confidence beyond the work situation.

* Changes in the distribution of functions and competencies are not without tension as they upset previous hierarchies of power and control. Particularly the traditional role and function of supervisors needs to be redefined necessitating the active involvement of the supervisors affected and their input into a meaningful re-definition of their role.

* Issues of intra and inter-group competition have to be addressed which can otherwise lead to speed-up and peer pressure on 'weaker' group members.

* The principle of self-design is critical. The process implemented in Zurich could not simply be adopted by employees in other facilities' they had to develop their own participation and re-design process.

The BAGE project: an option-oriented approach[9]

Context

This project involves a work reorganisation process at the Swiss federal patent off ice, an agency of the Swiss government in charge of handling patent applications and matters of trade mark protection for products as well as services. The goals of the agency's leadership was to create structures that would increase productivity, multi-skilling and flexibility as well as the autonomy of the employees. This was based on new guidelines set by the Swiss Federal Council for staff and organisation development within the federal administration agencies. These guidelines mentioned 'staff competence development, increased organisational flexibility and strengthening of leadership' as key goals. The project described was to be one of several pilot projects to be conducted within federal administration agencies.

Process and outcomes

In initial discussions with the agency's leadership, the consultants proposed a multi-phase process which is summarised below

Phase 1: Information: analysis of documents and initial discussions with agency staff.

Before the project started all employees were informed about its goals and that any changes in work organisation and structures would be determined in co-operation with the employees. A project group was formed, involving representatives from various leadership levels as well as an employee representative elected by his/her colleagues The project objectives developed by this group included: decreased division of labour (less task fragmentation) and increased multi-skilling: fostering of employee potential more efficient work flow while maintaining high quality, broadening of decision-latitude, competence and responsibilities of employees, formation of work teams wherever possible.

Phase 2: Analysis and feedback

An analysis of the work situation (tasks work flow, co-operation aspects) was conducted based on a socio-technical systems approach This involved: selection of typical work assignments at all important stages of the work process, discussions with employees; observation of work flow processes; a standardised survey among employees. Consultants also presented similar projects in other organisations to the project group.

Information/feedback meetings with all employees were held to discuss the findings of the employee survey. Some of the key results were: task fragmentation and specialisation is high; learning opportunities are low to medium-, routine work is medium to high; back log is too high' flexibility is too low, work tools and procedures are partly outdated, missing or inefficient. On the other hand, quality, work climate and employee commitment was judged positively, while there was no agreement of the assessment of working conditions and information/communication from top down.

Employees seemed interested in these findings, but sceptical toward such concepts as multi-skilling and group work. The consultants attributed this to: lack of perceived pressure for change and insufficient information about alternatives' fear of the prospect of organisational change in addition to the planned introduction of new information processing programs and a new patent law' resignation and scepticism since earlier analyses had led to no changes.

[9]This project is described (in German) in more detail in: F. Frei, M. Hugentobler, A. Alioth, W. Duell, and L. Ruch: **Diekompetente Organisation: Ein Leitfaden fur qualifizierende Arbeitgestaltung**. Zurich: Verlag der Fachvereine and Stuttgart: Schaffer-Poeschel Verlag, (in press. Available September 1993).

Phase 3: Input

After five additional employees from several work areas joined the project group, examples and experiences of work reorganisation projects in other administrative and service sector organisations were presented by the consultants. Support for the goals and direction of the project expressed by the department director in a meeting with the expanded project group had a motivating effect. Specific project objectives were developed based on the goals defined in phase 1: for example, decentralisation of classifications (multi-skilling)' need for a training and competence development concept, management by objectives. Subsequent information and discussion of these objectives with all employees in small groups indicated more openness but remaining scepticism, in part due to lack of understanding of the meaning of concepts like multi-skilling, group work etc. Clarification of these concepts in small groups (using examples from other similar organisations) seemed to change fearful attitudes from 'I have to know everything' to 'I can and should learn some new things'.

Phase 4: Design and evaluation of work organisation alternatives

The project group developed six work redesign alternatives involving varying degrees of change in work organisation, group autonomy and degree of task specialisation. Employees were informed about the six alternatives and suggestions and reactions were noted. Two alternatives were further pursued: Alternative 'Crown Prince' would involve three types of groups, one for administration, one for information checking, and one for research (meaning that one case might have to be handled by all three groups). This alternative was closer to the current process than alternative 'Ultra' which would consist of five parallel groups, each handling a patent or trade mark case from beginning to end. Implications of the implementation of each alternative were explored (ie. impact on job classification system, spatial arrangements, other resources needed, including data processing capacities). Following a thorough evaluation of these alternatives, 12 of 13 group members voiced support for alternative 'Ultra' which implied the reorganisation of the department into five equal multi-skilled work teams. This proposal was accepted by the agency's leadership.

Phase 5: Implementation planning/Implementation

All employees were informed, addressing individual concerns that the increased scope in job demands would occur in phases in line with the needs of each group and the preferences of individual group members. Planning of next steps: proposal for the composition of each group's feedback to employees, modifications and group formation development of a task demand profile for the role of the group supervisor, development of personal 'wish lists' in all five groups and determination of qualification requirements and education and training needs. This phase is currently in progress, and is to be concluded in the fall of 1993 at which point implementation will begin.

Evaluative comments and key lessons

* There are no fundamental barriers to planning and implementing work redesign projects in the public administration sector.

* If resistance exists, it may be the result of historical experiences in which pressures for change and increased efficiency have often been low

* Employees in work organisation structures characterised by a relatively high degree of task fragmentation and specialised work organisation are capable of designing work organisation structures with a high degree of autonomy and multi-skilling. Of central importance are the need for input (other examples) and clarification of concepts and goals as well as the ongoing involvement and information of all employees affected by the change.

* The direct involvement of the responsible leadership which communicated its support for the project clearly helped to dispel initial doubts on the part of employees that this was just another analysis to be put on the shelf.

Conclusions

A preliminary assessment of the CIM Action Program and some key lessons relevant to the practical implementation of work reorganisation projects have already been mentioned above. In concluding, some implications are suggested that reflect the thoughts of the author in terms of 'the bigger picture': . The importance and long-term success of the CIM Action Program may lay in the fact that in addition to providing technical expertise, it introduces concepts of work psychology and participatory forms of work re-organisation and work design not just to interested firms but reaches the network of institutions of higher education where future managers and technical professionals are being trained. As experience has shown, organisational innovations that involve changes in previous structures of work organisation and control through the reallocation of work activities and decision-making authority, seem bound to fail in the absence of active support and commitment by the leadership.

Yet in spite of the stated goals, the danger that the fascination with technical aspects will dominate this project and neglect the implications and potential of social and work re-design innovations seems very real. This cannot be blamed only on what is sometimes viewed as the narrow-mindedness of engineers and managers. but is related to the difficulty of dealing with the less clear cut and less predictable processes of employee participation and to issues of control and influence. The fact that learning and competence development-oriented work redesign projects are still a relatively rare phenomenon - despite the well known economic gains (productivity and quality increases) - seems to support this argument.

As the manufacturing base in many industrialised countries continues to dwindle in favour of the service sector. it is sometimes suggested that unions have outlived their usefulness and role. Yet it appears that unions, representing the collective interest of their members, could and may have to play an important role in these ongoing organisational transformation processes by asserting pressure, redefining the issues and developing a knowledge base of their own, if technological change is to be successfully combined with social and organisational innovations that support employee learning and competence development in the workplace beyond a few well publicised success stories. To be able to do this, and to regain the attention of an increasingly critical, diverse and well-educated workforce, unions. too. must change. This means acquiring expertise about social and technical innovations, playing a constructive, pro-active. rather than a merely re-active role, and addressing the interests of their members beyond traditional bargaining issues of wages and working conditions. The QUBI project appears to be a promising step in this direction.

In Switzerland, as in some other industrialised countries we are proud of and have long valued our rights as citizens living in political democracy. In the face of a global economy where the goals and strategies of multi-national enterprises become increasingly divorced from the well-being of a nation's economy and its population the question of what an industrial democracy would look like acquires new urgency.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITY CIRCLES AS LEARNING CONTEXTS

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QUALITY CIRCLES AS LEARNING CONTEXT

Introduction

There has been great interest in quality circles (QCs) since 1962 when they were first introduced as a new concept for developing organisations. Quality circles are personnel groups in an organisation. The group members come together regularly to solve problems they confront in everyday work. There are usually 4-6 people in one group who share common tasks within the organisation. QCs have interested scholars in different fields of research and therefore there is a lot of scientific knowledge about them.[1] Now such terms as 'team work', 'quality improvement groups', 'development groups' and so on are more often used instead of 'quality circles' in the western world, but interest in this type of activity is growing.

There has also been much discussion and interest in organisational learning and learning in the workplace during the last decade.[2] Learning is not important only for the adaptation of organisations and employees but also for ruling, improving and creating 'new' in our ever changing world. We need to see learning in the workplace (and other contexts too) as an active, problem oriented and reflective process which contributes to both individual and organisational development.

Although we have done intensive work reviewing the literature of QCs, we haven't found much about the combination of QCs and learning. This is surprising because we think that the QC, besides its main functions, could also provide a good learning context. Workers and the organisation can learn in and within QC activity. But what, how and in which conditions? Is it possible to facilitate learning within QCs? How?

In this paper we will conceptualise the idea of learning within QC activity a little further and present some results concerning our research on learning within QCs.

Description of the project

The title of our research project is 'Work as a focus of continuous education and as a learning environment'. The project is funded by the Finnish Academy for 1990-92, although not for full-time research.

The target organisation of our project is the Construction Bureau of Helsinki (later CBH). The CBH has got about 2,000 workers. Its responsibility is to build and maintain official buildings, streets and parks in Helsinki. In the CBH there have been QCs since 1984. At the moment there are about 50 QCs, but only about half of them are active. Altogether there are about 300 members of QCs in the CBH.

Lately we have focused our interest on four QCs. We have interviewed these groups both as groups and also the members of the groups as individuals. We have plenty of documents about the work of these groups. At the moment we are intensively analysing the material.

The earlier studies of the CBH have described the QC activity as a whole[3]; there have also been two intensive case studies, one about problem solving process[4] and one about the development of an innovation[5]; and also an attitude and opinion survey of the workers.[6] These studies are in many ways the basis for the current research work.

Education, training and learning in organisations

There are numerous examples of organisational literature where the focus has been on education and training. It is said that training is one of the most important ways to improve the organisation. We agree that training can be important, but only if it is facilitating learning. Learning is fundamental for the improvement of a person or an organisation, not the training or education itself. In discussions about ways to improve organisations we need to shift the focus from education and training to learning.

Learning is not only memorising and knowing things, although it is useful to remember and know something. We have adopted the idea of learning as problem oriented and mostly co-operative activity. People learn through active reflection in collaborative actions.

Learning is not only something happening in formal and planned situations, e.g. in schools, colleges and training centres. Learning takes place continuously and thus it is lifelong. In educational literature there are many different definitions of the forms of learning. We have adopted a definition of Marsick and Watkins. They divide forms of learning into formal, informal and incidental.

* Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based and highly structured.

* Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and the control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner.

* Incidental learning is a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organisational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning.[7]

Although learning in the workplace is mainly informal or incidental e.g. learning within a QC or some other small group or in everyday working practice, we don't yet have much scientific knowledge about its elements and how to support it. One of the main areas of research in adult education in the near future will be to deepen knowledge about informal learning, especially in organisational contexts.

The Quality Circle as a learning context

Often, informal learning takes place in social activities where people meet each other, work together or have something else in common. That's the reason why we can't restrict our study only to individuals learning but we need to see learning as a collaborative activity, as group learning.

Thus, one way to study informal learning is to analyse the organisational settings where people are working together. In many cases the collaboration has been made possible through small group activities like QCs, teams, autonomous working groups etc. In our research we study what kind of a place a QC is for learning. The concept of QC activity is well known and documented widely in many forms and different languages.[8] We will concentrate on some points of it.

There are many important although quite idealistic goals in the 'philosophy' of QCs. According to Lillrank one of those is the twofold goal of company building and man building.[9] At the moment we are concentrating on the man building, human side of the QCs. One way to study the human side of QC activity is to look at it from the educational point of view.

There are some educational aspects which can be derived of the QC concept. First, the continuing training of the QC members is a key factor of the concept; second, the problem solving tools which have been taught may be effective and usable not only in QCs but also in many other everyday life situations; and third, working in a group is a very fundamental human skill and it will be practised in QCs regularly. As a whole the QC activity can be a good ground for learning because of its active and systematic working manners.

* How do the educational aspects of a QC take place in practice?
* What are the organisational and contextual determinants of learning within QCs?
* How is it possible to facilitate QCs to adopt a more learning oriented approach to their activity?

The Finnish or Japanese way of QC activity

The utilisation of QCs differs considerably according to organisational, national and traditional culture. The roots of QC activity are in America but its main growing field has been in Japan. QCs and the whole Total Quality (TQ) ideology have fitted well into Japanese traditional culture. The results counted by economical measures have been huge.

The adaptation of the TQ-ideology into the Western world has been problematic in many ways. The wholeness of this ideology hasn't been understood very well. For example QCs have been taken out of the larger concept as a unique technique and used as a tool for organisational development. This is also the case in most organisations in Finland, especially in our target group CBH. We will analyse later the differences of our target organisation and Japanese organisations and we'll also try to make some preliminary suggestions to improve the adaptation of the QCs and the whole TQ-ideology into Western organisational life.

Analysis and evaluation of QC activity

The main aim of our study is to describe the history and current status of QC activity in the CBH and especially concentrate on the activities of four groups which we have chosen. We are developing a model to evaluate the work of these QCs. The following three questions can be seen as the dimensions of the QC activity:

1. How the QCs are applying the QC tools in their problem solving? (restricted vs. multisided)

2. What is the organisational scope of the QC activity? (narrow vs. broad)

3. What is the degree of transformation in the developmental work? (minor vs. significant)

We assume that a group which can apply QC and other usable tools in its problem solving process works more effectively and learns more than one which is using tools restrictedly. We also assume that a QC with broader organisational scope in their activity will succeed better than a narrow scoped group. The significant degree of transformation in the developmental work can also be a result of effective QC activity and thus a mark of organisational learning.

In a broader sense we are interested in how the membership of a QC changes the individual, as a worker and a person. Does working in QC activate people? Are QC members better workers? Have the opinions about work and the organisation changed somehow? These are the human side questions of QC activity.

We are not only interested in the description of QC activity in our target groups but we try to understand the relation between QCs and learning. What kind of factors hinder or improve learning? Are there any ways to facilitate learning in QCs or to develop them in another way?

Empirical data

We chose to collect empirical data from four QCs. The first sampling criterion was that the chosen QCs should be active and well-functioning and second that the chosen QCs should contain a variety of groups.

We have collected data about these groups mainly by interviews. We have interviewed all the four QCs as groups. After these group interviews we conducted 23 individual interviews of all the members of these groups. The interview material consists of people's subjective QC experiences, thoughts and opinions about their work and life course. Besides the interviews we have plenty of documents about the groups; e.g. records of the meetings, analysed problems and the solution suggested to them and also different kind of statistics.

We believe also that through qualitative data we may find some new ways to look at the QC activity.

Some results and remarks

QCs in the CBH seem to be working quite well, if we look at them on the surface level; the interviewed members of the QCs have been satisfied with the QC activity. The documents show that QCs have made many good suggestions for improvement and the economic savings of these improvements have been significant. Also we have found some 'normal' problems such as an absence of support from managers, jokes from other workers and the lack of co-operation between different QCs, as well as between a QC and other workers in the same workshop.
If we look at QC activity more critically, e.g. using the evaluation questions we presented earlier, we will find that the problems QCs solve are rather 'small and simple', the organisational scope of their activity is quite narrow and the changes their improvements make are also minor.

The activity of the QCs has been mainly low-profile and cautious and we could say that the organisational and group level learning hasn't been significant. There are at least two interesting exceptions to this in our target groups, QC Thursday and QC Sign.

Quality Circle 'Thursday'

Thursday is a group from the street maintenance section of the CBH. Their work is to clean up the streets in winter time. Thursday has got five members from different task groups. They meet about once in fourteen days for one or two hours.

After solving some minor problems Thursday has concentrated on one big problem. Through intensive discussion and analysis they found out that traffic signs are the main barriers to make their work more effective. They made systematic research work to map the problem places in their working area. After the fieldwork they planned a presentation of this problem. They designed some suggestions as to how to change the actual situation and made their point of view about better street planning in future clear to officials.

After all this preparation, Thursday organised (with the help of the QC supervisor) a conference to which they invited their managers, planners and even some state officials. They demonstrated their problem with slides and maps and presented their suggestions for solving the problem. The reaction to their presentation and work was at that time very positive and they were given promises of change.

After some months, they noticed that nothing had happened. In the interviews the members of Thursday were quite bitter and disappointed. We suppose that they have learned a lot. Unfortunately this learning was not only positively-biased.

From the interviews of the individual members of the QCs, we found out that the main thing they have learned from QC activity is a 'new way to look at work'. They are now much more interested in the work they are doing. They are actively looking for possibilities to improve their work and work settings. Although the QC activity has activated them in their work they can't say that there have been any changes in their personal life. They haven't thought to use QC ideas and tools in their everyday life.

Our analysis of the Thursday's QC activity is that the main problem is not the members of the group and the group itself, but the bureaucratic and rigid working context. Thursday doesn't have real possibilities to change the things necessary to improve their work. Co-operation within a large organisation can be problematic, especially when innovations come from the bottom of the hierarchy.

Another problem is that the constellation of the group isn't natural but representative. Members of the group haven't always got the same motivation to solve the problems they have.

Quality circle 'Sign'

Another interesting group among those we studied was a QC named Sign. As with the previous example, QC Thursday, Sign is also a group from the street maintenance section of the CBH. Their main task is to produce different kind of signs, mostly traffic signs for the city. The sign producing system is primarily simple and manual. To make production more effective the workers have made lots of small improvements in their working systems and they have also developed their tools. All this development work has been made in the QC which all the workers belong to.

Although they haven't made very radical changes in their work and working context, it can be said that QC has had an important meaning for its members and the whole workplace. Through the QC activity every employee has the chance to make contributions to the development of their work or working environment. This has been quite a fundamental change compared to their earlier situation or the actual situation in other working units in this big bureaucratic organisation.

QC activity is nowadays continuous and daily. Workers enjoy getting together around the coffee table to discuss and plan new solutions to their work-related problems. To solve their problems they have gathered lots of information from various sources and they have also made some experimental tests of different production systems and prototypes of their tools. The main problem which has been raised through this work has been the need for advanced knowledge and training in the field of sign production. This knowledge and training is very difficult to get in Finland.

From interviews with individual members of the QC we have found that there is an increased interest in their work. Although the experiences of QC activity have been very good, the workers haven't used the ideas of QC in their everyday life outside the workplace.

Our analysis of Sign's QC activity is that it works well on the whole. They make important, if quite small, improvements in their working systems and the atmosphere in the workplace is excellent. In the longer term, the QC may have problems motivating people to make these 'small improvements'. The possibility to develop the production system (in principle quite simple) of signs is limited. In order to make more radical changes it would be necessary to have very specialised knowledge and skills and the volume of production should be greater. These changes are hardly growing from inside of this workplace. The support of the whole organisation should be more visible.

Discussion

Through our studies we have learned that QC activity may be a good learning context but it isn't necessarily that by nature. The QC concept is quite rigid and ritualistic. It's a good starting point but it can restrict activity later. QCs need continuous support and encouragement by management to go on and to develop the activity. We think that one way to facilitate QC activity is to offer its members more opportunities for training and learning e.g. in order to enhance their understanding of their working settings and the whole organisational system, so to say, to broaden their organisational scope.

At an individual level we have learned that the transfer of learning from work to leisure within QCs isn't notable. Perhaps the reason is that there is very sharp distinction between work and leisure among Finnish blue collar workers. There may be other explanations too. Currently we are studying this problem more intensively.

At the moment we think that the main things to be improved in the western use of QCs are contextual and cultural in nature. Organisations should adopt a more holistic view to their continuous developmental processes. Every member of the organisation should have a shared vision about the future and how to reach it. This requires a significant amount of planning and an active top-down, bottom-up dialogue. And it is not only a question within one organisation. Organisations and other institutions like schools, adult education centres and universities should be connected to each other as functional networks. These networks could benefit not only the organisations in their developmental needs, but also employees, the people, in their personal and societal needs. The essential question is what kind of structures, methods, training and personnel management systems are required in this effort. Personally I am now trying to combine the method of TQM (Total Quality Management) and the model of learning organisation for my research and teaching activities.

Endnotes

1. See, eg, Barrick & Alexander 1987 - van Fleet & Griffin 1989; Lillrank 1988; Miller & Monge 1986; and Steel & Lloyd 1988.

2. See, eg, Argyris & Schon 1978; Garratt 1987; Leymann & Kornbluh 1989; Marsick 1987; and Schon 1983.

3. Sarala 1990.

4. Jalko 1990.

5. Winter 1991.

6. Niskanen 1990.

7. Marsick & Watkins 1990, 12.

8. See, eg, Dewar 1980.

9. Lillrank 1988, 14.

10. More detailed in Jalko 1990 and Winter 1991.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

FORD MOTOR COMPANY
UK

THE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Ford Motor Company

The Ford's Employee Development and Assistance programme(EDAP) was introduced as part of the 1987 national pay negotiations with the Trade Unions. The programme offers sponsorship for voluntary activity or study undertaken outside of working hours and all of Ford's 30,000 employees are eligible to apply for assistance.

The intention is to offer employees a wide range of opportunities for personal and career development. These can include education, training, retraining or other development activities as well as a variety of services to encourage healthier lifestyle.

The programme is not intended to replace the company's job related training, nor does it replace the employer's obligation to provide occupational health service. Although similar programmes have been introduced by other motor manufacturers, Ford believe that its programme is still unique in its level of funding and as an example of co-operation between unions and management.

The programme is run by a tripartite committee, made up of representatives from the staff and hourly unions and Ford management. At the site level there are 21 local committees which manage the programme within their allocated budget. In 1992 Ford won a National Training Award for EDAP.

National Joint Programme Committee

The National Joint Programme Committee NJPC is made up of 12 representatives from the unions which cover hourly workers, and 12 from the salaried unions and including 10 representatives of the company's management. The NJPC is chaired jointly by Jack Adams Deputy General Secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union(T&GWU), Bob Hill Director of Personnel Ford of Britain and Jim Thomas National Officer of Manufacturing-Science-Finance (MSF). The NJPC is responsible for establishing and reviewing the programmes goals and objectives, and monitoring progress and developing communications.

EDAP Funding

The programme is funded by the company based on a payment for each employee. This has increased from £40 per employee in 1988/89 to £55.11 per employee in 1992/93. Although established within the national pay negotiations framework, neither the hourly nor the salaried unions included an increase to EDAP in their claims to the company; EDAP employee allocation has increased in line with the annual settlement automatically. From November 1993 funding will be calculated as £56.49 per employee and because Ford has concluded a two-year deal, it will increase by the 3.5% or, the Retail Price Index (RPI) if higher, in November 1994.

Over the last five years the programme has received over £10 million from the company. Annual funding has increased from £1.8 million in 1988/89 to over £2 million in 1992/93. However, because of an overall fall in the number of employees, the total budget will fall slightly in 1993/94.

Local Joint Programme Committees (LJPC)

As at the national level, there are similar tripartite committees which determine how EDAP funding will be spent at each of the 21 sites. At the largest sites, the local EDAP committees budget can be as much as £175,000 depending on the number of employees. However, the NJPC was concerned that the allocated budgets at the smallest plants were too small to run an effective programme. Therefore in 1992/3 the NJPC set a minimum level of funding of £5,000 per committee and then the funding would be pro rata; this would assist the smaller sites to use the extra funding for on-site provision such as classroom or a fitness centre.

The LJPC are responsible for approving individual applications for financial assistance of up to a maximum of £200 a year per employee; some local committees have had to make certain restrictions on the £200 limit due to a large demand. The programme deliberately has few rules and the LJPCs need to be flexible. Requests for assistance towards the cost of leisure activities were a problem in the beginning. Should EDAP pay for golf or sailing courses? There is now evidence to prove that employees who did participate in golf training and other leisure courses have continued with EDAP and are learning a language or have progressed onto a more academic route. In such cases the course needs to lead to a recognised certificated or structured learning experience. Where approval is granted, payments are made directly to the college or other organisations as required.

Local committees have considerable autonomy in how they spend their budgets. In addition to individual sponsorship LJPCs may undertake larger projects such as establishing, language facilities or fitness centres; this enables the committees to reduce costs by offering certain courses in-house. Any financial surplus may be carried over or used in a joint project with other sites. Committees are also responsible for assessing employee needs and may invite local colleges to run courses on site at times which are convenient for employees who work shifts.

Local Educational Advisors

The programme also funds 18 local education advisors to help employees decide which educational or developmental training is most suited to their needs. The advisors are primarily recruited from an adult education background and employed by the University of East London but report to their LJPC. They arrange suitable training courses on or off site: liaise with local colleges and other EDAP committees: and handle all administrative procedures for the programme within the general policies established by the local committees.

In addition to a range of internal publicity materials and local open days, some larger Ford sites have established EDAP drop-in centres; here, employees are able to discuss any educational problem in total confidence. As so many employees have taken part during the past five years, personal recommendation plays an important part in encouraging employees to seek assistance. This is especially true where people have problems with basic skills in literacy or numeracy and EDAP has succeeded where earlier adult literacy classes run by Ford have been unable to attract participants. Last year EDAP secured additional funding from the Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU), this enabled the Dagenham site to offer an on-site drop in centre.

Employee Take-up

In the first year, 1988/89, there were 6,000 applications for assistance, representing 13% of employees. Although this total includes people taking more than one course, by 1991/92 there were 21,399 applications, 55% of the workforce and an even higher total is predicted in 1993. The actual participation rates have increased from 31.3% of employees receiving EDAP assistance in 1990/91, to 33.7% in 1991/92.

Menu of available courses

COURSE CATEGORY	PER CENT
Education & academic	6
Languages	13
Business studies & IT	4
Music & performing arts	2
Arts & handicraft	4
Craft skills(construction)	11
Other skills(first aid)	11
Personal development	2
Health(aerobics)	17
Health(weight loss)	11
Leisure/Sport	18
Other	1

The top ten EDAP courses are: Bricklaying, Computer Literacy, Languages: German, Spanish, French, Crafts (DIY), Academic courses(GCSEs), Music, BTEC courses, and Art.

There are 27 different languages courses currently being studied by Ford employees.

EDAP Degree Programmes

There are 240 employees taking degrees (0.6% of total of employees). 20 employees are expected to graduate in 1993, and a further 60 in 1994.

Some EDAP committees understood the need for a Ford/EDAP structured degree programme, Halewood has a close working link with Liverpool Institute of Higher Education and have developed degrees in Management/Business Studies and Information Technology; similarly Dunton in Essex has developed their degree courses through Anglia University. Both committees offer this access to academia to employees, which is more flexible than the other more traditional route.

A feature of the success of the EDAP scheme is that it has made it possible for shiftworkers to attend further education courses. Most Local authority classes are held on set days, often in the evening. At Ford's Dagenham site, local colleges hold on-site classes at more convenient times. Dagenham also has an Open University tutor on site every Saturday morning. On-site facilities are cheaper and 43% of courses are held on site compared with 57% of-site.

The Transferability of EDAP

Many companies have now seen the benefits of providing an employee development scheme. Some organisations have replicated the EDAP structure while others are more company driven. The following companies have now developed a variety of schemes:

PEUGEOT BODY SHOP POST OFFICE ROVER BAXI HEATING

ICI JAGUAR LUCAS COLEMANS APPLEYARD

VAUXHALL SHEERNESS STEEL

There are a few local TEC's who are encouraging development scheme within small companies; one example is the "Derbyshire Employee Development Initiative"(DEDI).

There is an enormous interest from the education world with a considerable amount of help, especially from National Institution for Adult Continuing Education and from local colleges and universities. In the early days Ruskin College, Trade Union Research Unit at Oxford, were commissioned to evaluate the concept of EDAP prior to its release. A questionnaire was developed and sent to every Ford employee; they were asked **what** type of courses they would like to go on, **where** they would like to learn and **when** would they like to learn. Subsequent initiatives have been based on the findings and illustrate how EDAP is employee-driven.

What are the benefits?

The direct benefits of EDAP accrue to the employees who participate. They have the opportunity to learn new skills, acquire new knowledge, or improve their health through fitness activities.

In particular it encourages people back into education. For some employees, who had previously considered themselves to be educational failures, EDAP represents a second chance. As courses are taken by choice and in the employees' own time, there is not the pressure which might be found in the company's own training courses. Starting from basic skills, many participants acquire the confidence to progress onto more academic courses and EDAP expenditure can also be of benefit to colleges in their areas and through the community.

The company also benefits from improved learning skills; however, there are wider benefits. As a joint programme for all employees, it helps to break down barriers within the workforce. The availability of funds has stimulated action by unions and managers, and joint responsibility for the budget has been a useful experiment for the unions. It has also led to other joint initiatives in areas such as equal opportunities and an alcohol/drug rehabilitation scheme. Therefore the Ford/EDAP statement for the 1992 National Training Award, attributed a greater co-operation between management and workforce and more positive discussion of industrial issues to its EDAP initiative.

CHAPTER SIX

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT IN BAXI HEATING

BAXI HEATING

PRESTON

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EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT IN BAXI HEATING

Baxi Heating, Preston, UK

Baxi Heating was founded in 1866 by Richard Baxendale and his two sons. They specialised in castings for the textile machinery industry and general engineering. The invention of the Baxi Patent Fire in 1935 led to the company's decision to specialise in the home heating market. From this, a large range of ancillaries and accessories have been developed, and in addition to producing solid fuel fires, Baxi, employing 1,050 are now the market leader in domestic central heating products, the most widely-known being the Bermuda Back Boiler.

In 1983, a fundamental change occurred. The company became the Baxi Partnership Limited. All existing shares were purchased from the shareholders and placed in an Employee Trust, administered on behalf of the employees by the trustees. This meant that from that date, the company belonged to the employees - the 'Partners'. Each eligible employee receives an equal allocation of shares each year as well as sharing in the company's profits. The Partnership Council looks after the interests of the shareholders and are in great demand from other companies both in the UK, Europe and Eastern Europe for guidance and advice on employee participation and ownership schemes. In 1988 the company became single status and there was massive investment to produce Europe's most 'environmentally friendly' Foundry, which was built at one of Baxi's three sites in the locality.

1990 saw a major change in the way the business was organised. Strategic business units replaced the traditional corporate structure and a whole layer of supervisory management was removed. Employees were organised into teams, and each team has a team leader. Total Quality Management, achieved through the company's Continuous Improvement Programme (CIP) is a major factor in current strategy.

Baxi Heating manufactures domestic heating appliances. As in most manufacturing industries, the trend in the 1980s was towards a widening gap between highly skilled and production workers, with the majority of jobs being repetitive and involving very few reading or writing skills. For many people, this resulted in a sense of 'being left behind' at work as well as at home where children can often outstrip their parents in their understanding.

The need for the development of basic educational and communication skills was initially identified by Baxi shop stewards attending a course at which Workbase, a Training Consultancy, specialising, in numeracy and literacy was also represented. Trade unions are very active and participative at Baxi and were keen to develop training at work. They suggested the idea of non-job-specific training to the company management, with the involvement of Workbase. The first meeting between Management, the Union Representatives and Workbase took place in 1989. The Board agreed the project in May 1989 and June saw a series of joint presentations to a random sample of 200 employees, 16% of the workforce at that time. The company had now committed itself to work place training, and to oversee the initiative a Steering Committee was established, consisting of the Human Resources Manager, Shop Stewards, a Production Manager and representatives from Workbase and Runshaw College. The first stage was to assess the education needs of the workforce and of the company. Workbase therefore conducted a training needs analysis through confidential random interviews for 120 employees. The training needs analysis revealed considerable interest in training and extensive 'training needs'; 82% of employees were interested in communication skills training - some in order to interpret the financial information the company supplied to its employees, eg. Annual Accounts. 44% needed broad communication skills, brushing up on writing or maths. A small proportion, 7%, had greater needs, with a lack of basic skills in writing and maths resulting in severe difficulties at work. The survey also detailed some job-specific needs including metrication. Although happy in their job, many employees, particularly semi-skilled, were frustrated by the lack of access to training and 24% were interested in promotion. Two main barriers were found to such

promotion: first, the perceived lack of opportunity and secondly low self-esteem and confidence. It was also made clear at this time that we would not be limited to these areas, that basic education was the starting point for more broadly based educational provision. The aim was to enable and encourage shop floor workers to become involved in training, to see it as relevant and to gain the basic skills and confidence needed to take up training opportunities.

The options available to the company were quite varied: what courses to offer, at which location, ie work or college, how to recover lost production time, whether to charge a fee, etc.

It was decided that the courses would take place in two locations, the Social Club at our main site and a general meeting room at one of our satellite plants. All courses would be run by Runshaw lecturers and would be free of charge. However, in order to gain commitment and to ease problems, a 'fifty-fifty' payback deal was agreed, ie 50% of time spent on Open Learning paid back in the employees own time if possible.

Baxi is a Partnership, with our people being our most important asset. To maintain our competitive advantage and remain market leader, we need to develop our existing staff in order to meet these demands. As our turnover is practically nil, for professional and shop floor staff, we cannot rely on new entrants coming straight from school or college and being armed with all the necessary skills. The company therefore feels that the responsibility for training and retraining its Partners rests within the company. The long-term objective is to have an educated and adaptable workforce and to create a learning environment in which basic skills education is just the beginning. Having rediscovered the joy of learning and the satisfaction of knowing that one is not just a pair of hands and thereby boosting confidence, encourages our employees to take up other training opportunities, both vocational and non-vocational. The expectations of the employees involved are clear and concise - they must be as committed to the training as the company is and always give to it their best. Nothing more and nothing less is expected or demanded. Those employees who want to be entered for exams and certificates can be, but there is no pressure at all for those who do not.

Tutorials are tailored to the individual, and are as long or as short as required. Short term needs, as identified by the training needs analysis, have been met, with the majority of employees who requested basic skills education completing their training. Long-term objectives, such as involving more of the workforce in open learning and tailoring more courses to the individual have been set. The language courses and in particular the computing courses are completely new to most students, and provide a stimulus to increase job satisfaction and personal development. With the advent of the European marker and EC directives regarding central heating, equipment and appliances, there may be in the future an opportunity for competing with other companies for the market in their own countries. Having employees able to speak French and German will give us a competitive advantage, as will computer-literate staff, as production processes become more automated.

The open learning scheme has not as yet been formally evaluated. The results have been evident by the number of employees completing certificates and progressing to higher levels such as GCSE Maths, and the number of new students signing up for courses. However, as part of the company's initiative to gain (Investor In People) status, evaluation of the training will be of prime importance and procedures will be implemented to enable both line managers and individual employees, along with training specialists, to take an active part in assessing our investment. Business improvements will not always be measurable in hard numbers or financial statistics, but due to the company's belief in and commitment to training, other factors can be taken into account, such as the enthusiasm and loyalty of the workforce and the ability to be flexible and adaptable.

Following the training needs analysis, courses in Maths, English and Metrication were devised. Leaflets describing the courses were distributed to the workforce and the courses began in November 1989. A total of 33 people attended the pilot courses, each being presented with a certificate. In January 1990, the Steering Committee proposed that a dedicated facility be set up to house the courses, as problems had arisen in the original locations. The rooms originally

used were quite open to other members of the workforce, and the social club environment was not conducive to learning. The Board approved setting up the facility and in October 1990 the Open Learning Centre was formally opened, converted from an old shower block at a cost of £10,000. Since the initial three courses were offered, further courses have been set up, designed and delivered by tutors from Runshaw College. They are tailored to meet the needs of both the employees and the company. Current courses offered include Basic Computer Awareness, a three week introductory course, RSA Information Technology, an open learning, package; French and German Language, from beginners level through to more advanced: English and Maths, from basic level to GCSE level. All learning takes place on site in the Open Learning Centre which is open 14 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The facilities provided are:- two PCs, one laser printer, TV & Video, text books, self-study packs, language dictionaries, classroom area, private study booths, two language laboratories, audio and visual language tapes, inter-active video system and stationery. Students are not formally evaluated unless they want to be, although they are given certificates of attendance on completion of a course. The company offers Foundation Accreditation in Maths and English (FAME) accredited by the Open College of the North West, Lancashire, Graded Tests for French and German and RSA in IT. There are currently 29 people studying German, 12 studying French and 25 studying Maths and English. Eighty employees are awaiting the launch of the RSA Computing Course currently being piloted. Teaching takes place four afternoons per week and courses are open to all employees with their Team Leader's agreement. However, numbers are restricted to 15 per tutorial due to restrictions on space available.

During the introductory period the Company has, naturally, been faced with problems. Shortly after the courses started, it underwent a major re-organisation which resulted in the reduction of the workforce by 100. At this time some employees expressed the fear of admitting to basic skills problems, and also a fear of being seen 'off the job', and were they extra to requirements?

Despite business pressures to abandon the scheme, the Company 'held its nerve', determined to continue with this leading edge initiative.

Other employees involved in the training were sometimes ridiculed by those not involved and the facility was known by some as the 'Early Learning Centre'. The potential harshness of 'Shop Floor humour' was never more evident and a newspaper article focusing on dyslexia and lack of numeracy brought this to everyone's attention. However, despite these potentially damaging factors, the initial courses were successful and the facility continues to be well utilised, with an average of 195 student hours per week.

The development of workplace education is perceived by the Company as being an essential part of its Partnership culture - the employees 'own' the business and therefore have a right to be able to contribute their best to it. It is felt to have increased motivation and made the employees feel more valued. Raising self esteem is seen as an essential objective if our goal of self empowered teams is to be fully realised. Before the project commenced, it was felt that communication skills would improve and a greater adaptability to change would be achieved. Since the initial development of courses, the company has been completely restructured, with the removal of one tier of management and the introduction of team-working. Employees working as empowered team members are involved in target setting, quality control and decision making. The concept of the internal 'customer' has been introduced and the company's Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) aims to achieve Total Quality Management.

As part of this aim, Continuous Improvement Teams (CITs) have been set up, encouraging team members to contribute and participate in discussions, researching improvements in the production processes and presenting the results, often in front of a large audience, and taking minutes of the meetings. Therefore, the production processes themselves do not require

improved basic skills, but being a member of a team does. Employees have increased confidence to respond to these new demands, after years of being treated as 'hands', not brains. Since the introduction of the scheme, managers have noticed that their teams have become more articulate and more confident in team meetings - one expressed it as 'they are answering me back more!'

As well as having a better educated work-force and the creation of a learning environment we now have a more adaptable workforce, more able and willing to learn. With improved work ability and quality. We have seen the industrial relations climate improve immensely, with not one failure to agree registered over two years. The joint Trade Union/Management approach has been instrumental in the success of the scheme. Other benefits include improved team building and understanding of the business, an increased take up of job-related training and employees taking the initiative in developing their own potential and career. A benefit for the company has been the recruitment advantages, with the initiative enhancing the company's image and directly attracting applicants who see a progressive company dedicated to training.

Our forward thinking approach to Training, particularly that relating to the Open Learning Centre initiative, has won us tremendous respect throughout industry. We have made presentations to Senior Managers and Trade Unionists from every part of the UK, industry 'top table' representation at major conferences, organised by the TUC and the Institute of Policy Studies. These and other highly prestigious seminars led to an approach from the BBC to appear in the series. 'Work is a Four Letter Word'. We were featured in six of the eight programmes and were the only manufacturing company to be targeted.

As a direct result of the Open Learning Scheme, through the involvement of Runshaw College, Baxi have entered into a Training Contract with the Celbic unit of the college (Central Lancashire Business & Information Centre). A portfolio of training services will be provided which will be appropriate to the needs of the company's workforce as defined by our Corporate and Strategic plans. These services include:

* The provision of a Computerised Training System which will support Human Resource Development by:

  i. Recording previous qualifications required by employees.
  ii. Recording identified training and development
  iii. Recording progress towards the Attainment of NVQs by individuals.

* The provision of a system of Accreditation of Prior Learning through which individual employees can identify their current competencies and match them to the content of NVQs and so develop individual training plans. This will also lead to the completion of a portfolio in preparation for accreditation. All employees provided with this service will receive an NROVA.

* The provision of training services for identified individuals or groups of employees with common training needs. This will cover all grades of staff, from managerial to shop floor and will include such needs as team-building, conflict awareness, interpersonal skills and instructional techniques.

* The provision for each employee of a voucher entitling the holder to enrol on either two short courses, or one long course within the college's Adult Education Programme. This includes both vocational and non-vocational courses. The number of students currently enrolled for the academic year 1992/1 993 is 130, on programmes ranging from electronics to Chinese cookery.

In addition to these training services the company also runs several in-house training courses to meet employees' needs identified by the training needs analysis. These include Team-Leader Training, Appraisal, Absence Control and Counselling. A wide range of job-specific Further and Higher education courses are also provided, ranging from an MBA to GCSE

Maths. On-the-job training in flexibility of labour is carried out by Team Leaders in order to meet the strategic objective of a multi-talented work-force. Both internal and external training courses are evaluated and feedback given to the relevant parties.

The company is investing very heavily in training over the next 5 years, each provision being identified in the strategic medium-term plan. We have learnt from the open learning basic education programme that opportunities which go beyond the immediate needs of the job can inspire greater employee interest in learning and promote adaptability. Baxi see it as a way forward if we do not educate and train our workforce, no one else will. Demographics tell us that 80% of the work-force of the year 2000 are actually working for us now. The issue therefore is not merely training, but retraining.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WARM HEARTS OR COOL BUSINESS? EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TO WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMMES

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WARM HEARTS OR COOL BUSINESS? EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TO WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMMES

The evidence put forward in this paper is taken from data collected over a two year period, on a research project entitled 'Adult Learning At Work', funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

This research fell into three parts:

1. We looked at three case studies in depth, and four other case studies briefly.
2. We conducted a telephone and questionnaire survey of employers in the north west of England to ascertain their attitudes to workplace basic skills training, and
3. We looked at the context and the general development of workplace basic education, in the UK and internationally.

What we plan to present at this conference is a model we are developing for looking at the 'actors', or stakeholders, involved in workplace basic education schemes, followed by a discussion of employers' views on the benefits of, and the blocks to, setting up basic education schemes at the workplace. An 'activity' part of the workshop session will then consist of assigning roles of the different 'stakeholders' to participants and asking them to make decisions on the implementation and management of a workplace basic education scheme in one or two of the small firms which we spoke to during our survey.

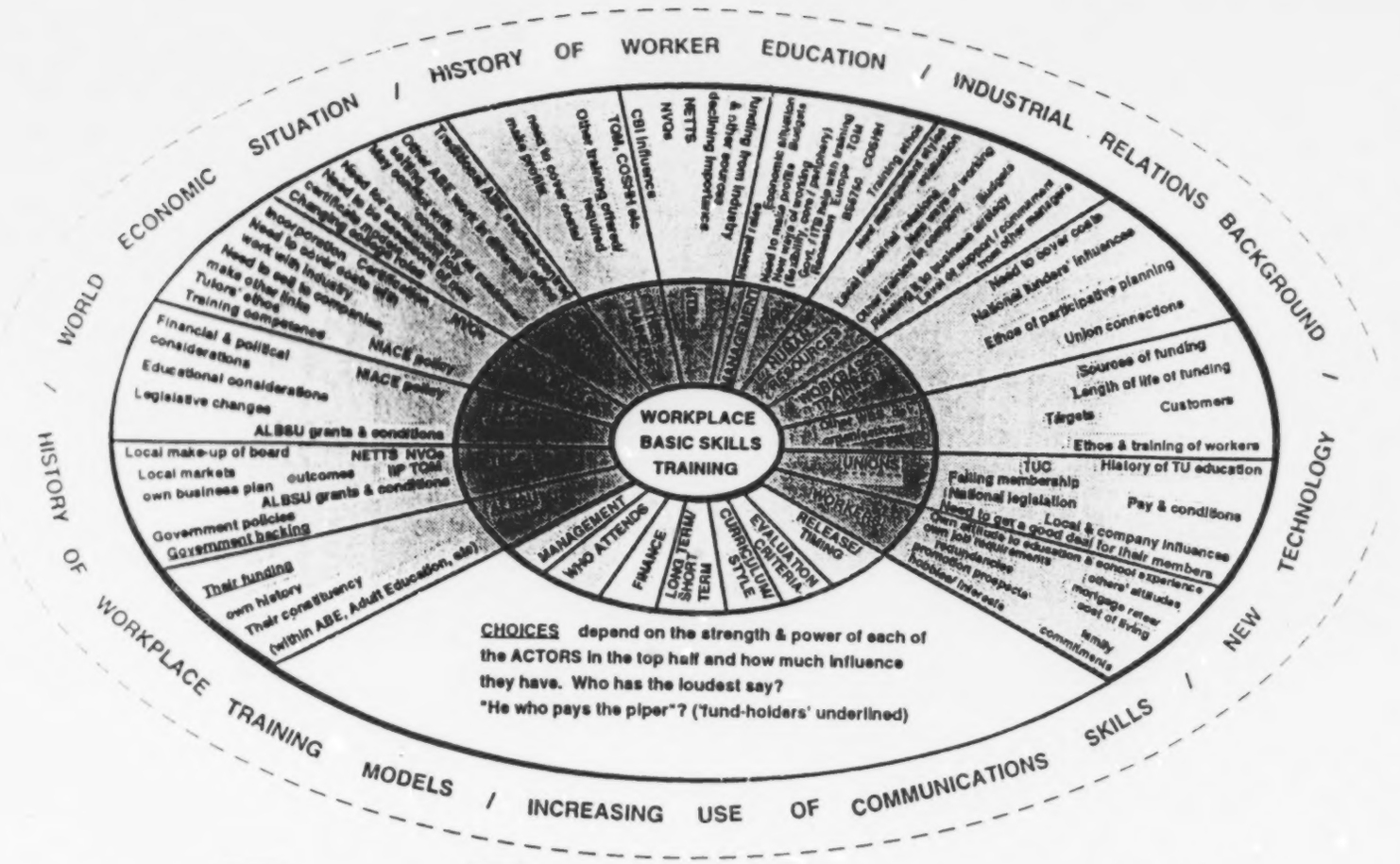
PART ONE

A Model for Analysis of 'Actors and Influences' on Workplace Basic Skills Schemes

Actors

The diagram shows, in the deepest shaded sections, eleven main actors we have identified as playing a part in the decision-making around workplace basic skills training:

a. National education institutions; eg the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU)and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
b. Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs)
c. Local Education Authorities (LEAs)
d. Colleges
e. Tutors
f. Other trainers
g. Industrial Training Organisations
h. Management
i. Human Resources departments
j. Workbase Training
k. Other workplace skills development consultancies
l. Unions and
m. Workers


WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION / HISTORY OF WORKER EDUCATION / INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BACKGROUND / NEW TECHNOLOGY / INCREASING USE OF COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS / WORKPLACE TRAINING MODELS / HISTORY OF
WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS TRAINING
CHOICES depend on the strength & power of each of the ACTORS in the top half and how much influence they have. Who has the loudest say?
"He who pays the piper"? ('fund-holders' underlined)
Influences
Actors
Choices
Global Influences

WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS TRAINING: A "MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS" MODEL © CSET 1993

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Global Influences

Each of these actors is situated in a changing world, and global changes, and global factors, affect them. The outer circle of the diagram shows some of these global factors which influence the actors we are looking at in this section:

* the world economic situation
* the history of worker education
* industrial relations background
* new technology
* increasing use of communications skills
* the history and models of workplace training world-wide.

Influences

Each actor plays a part in other domains in addition to that of workplace basic skills training. The lighter shaded area adjacent to each 'actor' puts forwards some of the influences from these other domains which will affect how they operate in relation to each other, and in relation to the training schemes.

a. **The national adult education agencies,** for example ALBSU (the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit) and NIACE (the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) are influenced in different ways.

   ALBSU receives funding from the Education and Employment departments in order to run the 1991-1994 Basic Skills At Work programme, which seeks to set up innovative workplace basic skills schemes around England and Wales, with TECs and LEAs working in partnership. The way in which it in its turn influences policy-making in workplace basic skills schemes is affected by the 'flavour' of its source of funding and the strings attached to this funding, which it then has to attach when passing the funding on to training providers.

   In addition, ALBSU brings together a wide range of Adult Basic Education practitioners, who are traditionally trained with a student-centred ethos, and college and centre managers, currently coming to terms with changing emphases and looking at 'numbers' and 'budget-heads' as well as 'output-related funding' (funding for courses assured by TECs and other funding bodies, not as hitherto 'per person starting off on the course', but, in part at least, 'per person achieving the required competence levels, accreditation level, or NVQ level within the term of the course').

   NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, is the 'National federal organisation that represents the interests of everyone concerned with adult Learning'. It functions as an awareness raising and advisory body. It is influenced by its membership, made up of researchers and practitioners in the world of adult and community education. It holds regular conferences on issues of importance in Adult Education, at which it attracts speakers of high repute within the Adult Education field. It publishes policy discussion documents and sponsors research into adult continuing education-related topics. It in its turn aims to influence policy makers and training providers: a 1991 Policy Discussion Paper, "Towards a Learning Workforce" (NIACE 1991) takes up a call made by Miliband in his paper 'Learning by right: an entitlement to paid education and training'(Miliband, 1990). The NIACE paper called for, among other changes; the adoption of a legislative entitlement for all adults between 16 and 65 to paid learning for 30 hours a year, supplemented by a right to 30 hours a year unpaid study leave. Legislation would need to be backed by cash-limited government funding, to supplement employers' existing and expanded training budgets, and by clear priorities for access to funding if demand exceeds budget. Individuals could store up unused entitlements for a number of years.

b. **Training and Enterprise Councils** are influenced by their local board members, made up mainly of representatives from local employers, with a small Trade Union representation. They receive some Government backing for particular projects, and have to compete with other TECs for some funding, including the ALBSU managed 'Basic Skills at Work' scheme funding. Their five year business plan, based on local factors at the time of writing, influences their actions during its life. They administer the Investors in People scheme and fund some training within workplaces, though a large majority of their funds go to paying for training for those not in employment They have to report on targets reached and most TECs are paying for at least some training on an 'output related funding' basis: this has its effect on how it in its turn can help workplace basic skills training schemes.

c. **Local Education Authorities** have financial and political considerations on how they spend their money to take into account, being influenced by central government as well as the local electors. The educational considerations which they must take into account if they are to do their statutory duties in providing for children and those in higher education sometimes seem to be lost when looking at how they approach discretionary duties towards adults. The legislative changes which have taken Further Education out of their control from 1 April 1993 have meant that they cannot make much impact on workplace basic skills schemes, being responsible only for the Adult Colleges and not the Further Education Colleges which may provide basic skills classes in their areas.

d. **Colleges** are also influenced by the legislative changes based around incorporation, and becoming responsible for their own budgets from 1 April 1993. In basic skills, new ratios less favourable to students seem to be being brought in to meet new cost-cutting exercises; increasingly, full-cost fees are being charged to industry; there is a pressure to sell tailor-made and 'off-the-peg' courses to industry in addition to any links made with basic skills schemes. Although they employ tutors who may well, as mentioned below in Section (e), have a very strong sense of 'student-centredness', and the 'student as client', it seems that in the current climate, to the college working with an employer on a workplace basic skills scheme, the employer and not the student is the 'client'.

e. **Tutors,** as well as running sessions in workplace basic education schemes, may well work in community-based settings too, where there are different priorities placed, for example, on the content of the curriculum, and on the importance of 'outcomes' such as certification. They may well be on part-time, temporary contracts, and be keen to find permanent work. Their training may have aligned them with a 'student-as-client', 'client-centred' approach to basic skills training, and the shift towards 'employer-as-client' may not fit easily within their philosophy. The tutor role changes when they become assessors of competencies for competence-based accreditation systems as well as traditional tutors.

f. **Other trainers**, who would mainly be working in private, profit-seeking training companies, are influenced by the need to recover their costs at source and find sources of profit in the training; and to link any basic skills training to other training provision the company may be able to offer. They are likely to be involved with the new standards such as TQM (total quality management), BS5750 (the British Standard on Quality) and to be seeking these standards themselves as wen as possibly offering training in them.

g. **Industrial Training Organisations** have a declining role in the national training scene, since the phasing out of the national training levy. However, it is the lead Industrial Training Organisation for each industry or sector which is formulating the requirements for the new National Vocational Qualifications at each level, and thus they have a part to play in the domain of workplace basic skills training. By establishing the competencies involved in the NVQs at each level, what level of core communication skills each level will contain, and what format the testing will take, the Industrial Training Organisations, or boards, determine what training in basic skills companies will have to provide for their workers before they are able to gain NVQs at each level. The new National Education Training Targets, aiming for 50% of the employed workforce to be aiming for NVQs or credits

towards them by 1996, implicates all industries, all sectors and all companies to look at these issues.

h. **Management within companies** are primarily concerned with balance sheets, and making the organisation profitable. The culture and ethos of the organisation, and individual managers' training and background, will influence whether workplace basic skills training is seen by management as a factor which can contribute to the profitability of the company, or otherwise as a distraction which takes workers off the shop floor unnecessarily. Management is concerned with new initiatives such as Total Quality Management, BS 5750 and other quality standards, particularly inasmuch as they affect the number of other organisations which will trade with them. They are also regulated by law to take account of new COSHH (Control of substances hazardous to health) regulations. They will be aware of overall changes in the nature of work organisation, towards a 'flexible workforce' and a 'core' and 'periphery' idea of employees. They will be concerned to relate any new training scheme to the overall business strategy within the company, and to the short and long term budgets within the organisation. It is management who has the overview of the organisation, and should be able to see the relevance, of finding out what demand there may be for core skills communications training.

i. **Human Resources Departments**, or personnel departments, are in their turn also influenced by the culture and ethos of the organisation in which they are working, and by changing management styles. They are aware of local agreements with trades unions on pay and conditions which may include a training element. They will want to relate any new training to existing training within the company, and to the overall business strategy of the organisation, and they will have training budgets to work to or to 'fight for'. The level of support they receive within the company from other managers for any new scheme is also an important factor.

j. **Workbase Training**, set up originally by NUPE, the National Union of Public Employees, and now an independent, non-profit making consultancy working in the field of workplace basic skills training, is influenced by its history and background within the trade union movement, and by its ethos of worker participation in decision-making around training. It however needs to cover its costs, and when it is in receipt of grant funding, needs to respect its funders' demands.

k. **Several other workplace basic skills development organisations** have been set up particularly in the last couple of years as a response to the ALBSU Basic Skills At Work initiative, funded partly by Training and Enterprise Councils. They have in many cases been set up with a 'Workbase Training' philosophy, but without being necessarily rooted in the Trade Union movement, they may be able to be influenced to a greater extent by management demands on, for example, the curriculum, and power-sharing issues. Their funding is critical to this extent.

l. Trade Unions primarily have a duty to obtain the best conditions for their members. Training is included in this together with pay and other conditions, and trades unions will always be in favour of training schemes which increase opportunities for members. The Trades Union Congress has endorsed the government's National Education and Training Targets (as has the CBI); core communications skills are a fundamental part of this programme. The TUC regularly shares a platform with the CBI at events promoting workplace basic skills training schemes (for example, September 1990 'Better Basic Skills - Better Work', ALBSU sponsored major event for employers, held at the CBI, with HRH The Princess Royal, John Banham, (Director General, CBI) and Norman Willis (General Secretary, TUC)). On the ground, local agreements on pay and conditions, and local industrial relations, will influence how local trades unions react to workplace basic skills training schemes: in 912 companies surveyed in a 1990 Labour Research Department survey, 31% of companies only informed unions about training decisions after they had been taken, and 22% did not inform them of training initiatives at all.[1]

m. **Workers** are influenced by their own individual situations when it comes to taking part in workplace basic skills schemes: the threat of redundancy; their level of pay; mortgage interest rates and rising cost of living, which might encourage individuals to see this kind of scheme as a distraction to the main activity of earning a living, are set against promotion prospects and any changes there may be in the requirements of the current job. Outside influences include the communications skills required in activities outside work, such as family, children (at school and beyond) and hobbies. Other influences are to do with the individuals' attitudes towards education, their own experiences of school and of education in general, and the attitudes of others at work and around them, including their immediate supervisors towards any return to learning on their part.

Choices

There are seven main areas where choices can be made around the way that workplace basic skills training operates in the diagram on page 67. The main areas are:

* *Management*: how the programmes are managed
* *Who attends*: who makes the choices about which workers attend, and whether the programme is optional or compulsory
* *Finance*: who funds the programme and at what level the funding is committed for
* *Long-term/short-term*: whether the programme is designed simply to meet specific short-term goals, or is funded for a specific short-term period; or whether it can be extended and its goals enlarged upon over time.
* *Curriculum/style*: whether the curriculum and the style of the Learning experience is student centred and negotiated with the students, or whether it is pre established by the management: or a mixture of the two.
* *Evaluation criteria*: what Performance Indicators have been established, and by whom, by which to evaluate the programme.
* *Release/timing*: Whether the sessions are timed to take place entirely, partly or not at all during work time; whether they are at an accessible time for all workers; and whether or not a 'release' arrangement has been made so that cover is provided for the absent student.

Decision-making

It seems to us that the issues around all these elements of choice depend on the strength, power, and relationship of the 'actors' in the network above. What is of particular importance is finance - those actors who are *budget-holders* and therefore have, we suggest, the loudest say, have been underlined in this, the final stage of the diagram.

Although we accept that there are always more elements which can be included in a model of this sort, the research described in the rest of this report has brought us to the conclusion that this is one way in which to represent the decision-making around workplace basic skills training in a relatively simple form, and on one sheet of paper!

PART TWO

Benefits of and Blocks to putting on workplace basic skills training

What's the bottom line?

Before introducing workplace basic skills training into a company, many personnel managers have to ask 'What's in it for us?'. They have to justify the cost of the training to their boards and their budget holders, who wig ask them the same question. In the recession, many companies (though not all) have cut their training budget. The scheme has to be seen to improve production levels or service provided, and the fact that it may well be of benefit to individual students, may or may not be an issue for consideration.

In the employer survey, respondents - most of whom were not providing such training - were asked what they felt would be the benefits of, and the problems arising from, providing basic skills training at the workplace. Their ideas divided roughly into eight different benefits and seven different blocks.

To complement this information, in the three case studies, and in the other schemes we looked at in the UK, managers and students were asked to think about what benefits and what problems had come up both for the company and for individuals as a result of the workplace training schemes. Each of the different 'themes' where the employers felt that workplace basic skills courses would be of benefit, were borne out by examples from students, managers and/or trade union representatives. In the case of the potential problems the employers felt might arise, some of these came up in the cases and were resolved: and some other problems also arose during the course of the programmes, which were dealt with as the scheme went along. Each different area is laid out below, together with stories told in the shape of the voices of managers, students, shop stewards or tutors, from the case study sites.

BENEFITS	BLOCKS
1. Greater accuracy	1. Lack of perceived need
2. Improved promotion prospects	2. Lack of suitable training ethos within or across a company
3. Facilitation of change	3. Cost and time
4. Improved communication	4. Difficulty of convincing potential students that they have a need for basic skills training
5. Job enrichment	5. Lack of available space at the workplace
6. Improving the company's image	6. Lack of opportunities for promotion within the company once people have better skills
7. Confidence building	7. Difficulty of monitoring its direct benefit
8. Personal development	

Additional **blocks** which arose during the course of the programmes:

8. Problems for students from work colleagues and/or supervisors
9. Lack of opportunities for students for progression within work time
10. High turnover of tutors

The figures given below are based on respondents' responses to questions about 'What benefits and what blocks there might be to putting on workplace basic skills courses.' They were not given any 'prompts', which means the answers they gave were the ones they had in their minds when they were talking to us. If, therefore, 20 respondents are cited as feeling that there was a particular benefit to be gained from putting on this kind of training, it does not necessarily mean that the other 53 did not feel their company would gain this benefit: just that it wasn't mentioned.

Section One: Benefits

1. Accuracy - elimination of errors

9 respondents in the employer survey (12%) felt that this kind of training would mean fewer errors, improved accuracy within the job, and would mean less supervision would be needed.

'Less rework due to reduced errors'
(managing director of medium sized industrial vacuum pump manufacturers)

'There would be less need to have work checked'
(human resources manager in a medium sized manufacturing research and development consultancy)

'Simple tasks would be correct - pallets would have the right quantities on'
(quality manager of a medium sized plastic moulding company)

Several respondents mentioned younger workers' lack of ability to use a calculator; more than one mentioned the fact that young people would fail to return the calculator to zero at the start of transactions.

The metrication courses at all three main case study sites and the maths classes all used materials and examples from the shop floor, and all included practice with use of a calculator and exercises in use of the decimal point.

Although it is difficult to give completely accurate 'before and after' evidence to prove that accuracy is improved after basic skills courses, the interviews we came out with students and managers in the Case Study sites point to some students feeling that they had made real improvements in their 'on-the-job' performance, and they feel that their accuracy at work has increased. One case study site, Richards & Appleby, felt that there was a noticeable increase in accuracy in one area in particular, with other areas also showing improvements.

'Before the classes we had approximately 30% error on issues of components from the warehouse to the line: after the training we had a 6% error.'
(Personnel manager, Richards & Appleby)

'At *work, I have to multiply how many things there are on the pallets. ... I used to use a calculator or get someone else to do it. I can't spend lots of time doing it with or without a calculator. For example, we've got to get 50,000 lipsticks out. If they're in packs of 6, how many pallets will I need?'*
(Student, Richards & Appleby).

'I'm an extruder driver. There's lots of measuring in that. The course has helped my understanding.'
(Student, BICC)

2. Improved promotion prospects

8 respondents (11 %) in the employer survey felt that this kind of training would help students to get better jobs, and to move up within the company. Although two companies expressed the view that they didn't want to train workers who would then go off and get better jobs elsewhere, most accepted this risk and set it against the benefits which would arise from having better trained and qualified workers.

'You may get a good craft person that could make a good supervisor if they could remove the barrier of illiteracy and innumeracy and by removing that barrier you've got a potential supervisor.'
(Training manager in a large hotel group)

'On the foreman level, he wouldn't have had a formal training in how to communicate with people as opposed to on an individual basis.'
(Commercial manager in a small distribution company)

Within the case studies, students talked about how the courses helped them in making job applications and in performance in higher level jobs:

'Doing a CV was helpful.'
(student, Richards & Appleby)

'It's been beneficial all round... It would help if I go for another job for example.'
(student, BICC)

'I've been promoted to audit quality control I might as well ... make the learning beneficial to the Company. It has been helpful in work.'
(student, Baxi)

'My new job involves more report writing. I might have filled a time sheet in before, but I haven't done any education for twenty years - if you don't use it, you lose it. ... I wanted to cover business letters, notes, messages and proof reading.'
(student, Baxi)

Several workers at Sheffield City Council talked about the Take Ten courses starting them off on the road to other courses and promotion, and helping them within the organisation:

'Other people have professional groups, whereas I actually came in as a labourer, so therefore you have nothing to start with, and it was basically the start of your growing in the city council ... the Take Ten course helped me improve my communication, it's given me the confidence to pursue my ambition, which was to be a land surveyor.'
(Alan Webb, surveying technician, Sheffield City Council (Sheffield CC))

'I just feel now that, because I've found I have got a brain, and it works better than I ever thought it did, that I could do quite a lot. I've been in cooking all my life, and I thoroughly enjoy being a cook. I don't feel any different to people who have got a higher job than I have, but I am seriously thinking of going into social work, and I'd like to do it within the juvenile system, because a lot of people think they're not as bright. I think they're a great set of kids, so I feel that if I take my education that bit further it will help me besides helping who I work for as well.'
(Maria Smith, cook, Sheffield CC)

3. Adapting to change

Six respondents in the employer survey (8.5%) mentioned that this kind of training would help students to adapt to current or forthcoming changes, to become more flexible: with the idea of promoting a 'teaming culture' within the organisation where workers would not be afraid to take on new ideas. The training could also be used as 'teaming support' for other courses.

'As technology moves so fast, people will have to relearn their skills maybe every 3 or 4 years.'
(Education Liaison Officer in a large pharmaceuticals firm)

'If there's a change taking place that your workforce can't cope with, it would obviously be much better to have the devil you know than the devil you don't know.'
(Training manager in a large steel stockholding company - talking about teaming support for students on another course)

'It gives them a bit more time to learn, and the pressure's off.'
(Engineering training manager at a large fuel processing plant)

Each of the Case Study companies had been making changes in their procedures and in each company the courses were found to be having an effect on the way that the changes were being accepted by the workers.

'In general the overall skills level is increasing and many people are taking the right level of advantage of the scheme. Even some of the 'stickers' have responded now. This means they may be ready at a different time to take on new skills and training when those newt, *skills are considered normal.'*
(Manager, Baxi)

'We are looking to carry on with the training when new regulations, new requirements, new Health and Safety laws and new processes need to be thought through.'
(Manager, Richards & Appleby)

'I'm on two CITs [continuous improvement teams] - quality and production. ... In the quality team I discuss quality faults, I take notes and take them back to the production team- the team leader doesn't chair or take minutes necessarily, it rotates.'
(Student, Baxi)

'To bring me up to date with today's metrication.'
(Student, Richards & Appleby: response to question 'Why did you go on the course?')

'More written capabilities are needed in my department and these are growing. For example, people have responded better than expected to the computers. They were introduced eight or nine years ago and used by the people in the offices; the storekeepers would just come in and tell the people in the offices what to key in. But now the storekeepers are starting to operate the computers themselves.'
(Manager, BICC)

'I have opportunities at works meetings taking minutes. I wouldn't have dared before. Now I will have the confidence to do it and I want to do it.'
(Student, Baxi).

Some students were using the courses as 'learning support' with other college programmes.

'The beauty about it is, if you are doing an outside course, you are having problems, you can bring it into the learning centre and do it in there, because you've got tutors from college.'
(Baxi shop steward)

'I'm doing CADCAM at college, and this course helps. I had to write a seven page report. Sue [the tutor] went through it with me.'
(Student, Baxi)

4. Improved communication

6 respondents (8.5%) mentioned that they felt reports would be better written, and communication between departments, to and from management, and to and from customers, would improve with workplace basic skills programmes.

'It would lead to a better relationship between departments.'
(Personnel manager in a small engineering packing company)

'If employees learn communication skills at all levels, not just filtering down from the top, if the information can be passed up to the top as well, then I think that messages coming from management have more credibility ... management will be more willing to listen to what's coming from the shop floor.'
(Personnel manager in a large aeronautical engine component manufacturer)

In the Case Studies, both management and students felt that all aspects of communication had improved:

'For BS5750 I'm doing a one off job at the moment: writing down details of each job starting from the beginning... 'you cut off the cable at 30 cm' So I have to analyse each job and write out instructions. Then I get someone who can't do the job to do it to see if it's clear. If not, I start again. I'm doing English in the classes.'
(Student, BICC)

'Two way communication has started. Instead of just blind acceptance the workers ask questions when you say something. It shows more awareness ... So they're no longer shy or afraid to ask.'
(Manager, Richards & Appleby)

'There's not a lot of report writing in my new job but there will be later. ... Those reports go to my boss and it looks more professional if it's done well.'
(Student, Baxi)

'In terms of health and safety, communication of information, they are more aware. They are able to appreciate their role and to protect themselves. There are certain warnings on COSHH [control of substance hazardous to health]. *And they take more notice of them now.'*
(Manager, Richards & Appleby)

'It helps fill time sheets in for breakdowns - spelling and paragraphs. I need to pass on to other shifts what I've done, so they can see quickly and simply. Instead of doing it long-windedly I do it briefly and to the point.
(Student, Baxi)

At Sheffield, students from the Take Ten courses also talked about improved communications skills:

'Well, good communication always helps, it stops arguments at source, I suppose, where you can sit down and talk a thing through.'
(Alan Webb, Surveying Technician, Sheffield CC)

'It's not helped directly in the work that I actually do, but it has given me more confidence, and I feel that I've got better communication skills through it. Ours is an isolated job, where you don't see your colleagues very much, you're just dealing with clients, and I feel I can

communicate a lot better with them, I've got more confidence to talk more freely with them ..... It's changed me that I'll be better, I think, at putting over my point of view as an employee, so it's benefited me from both sides, you know. But I think I'm also a better worker from going on the course, I think I've got more understanding of people in general.'
(Sharon Kimpton, Home Help, Sheffield CC)

5. Job enrichment

5 respondents (7% of the sample of employers) talked in terms of participants' jobs becoming more enriched, people getting a better idea of how their job fitted in to a whole, people being more fulfilled, more motivated and more involved in their jobs, and increasingly likely to want to 'give something back', by making suggestions for improvements.

'It would lead to job enrichment, and a greater understanding of why people are doing a mundane job'
(Operations Director of a large soft furnishings company)

'It would bring the awareness level higher'
(Production manager of a large electrical engineering company)

This area was definitely felt to be a successful area of benefit of the classes by interviewees in the Case Studies.

'With the new working routine, if another department stops because of my department, that department can bill us. So if I'm more educated, I can work out why and what can go wrong.'
(Student, Baxi)

'People have a more open mind to what's going on. People have started to ask how it's going to affect them -for example, when another business comes to look at the factory, it needs to be efficient looking and that will win contracts. I believe [the course] has made a difference.'
(Manager, Richards & Appleby)

At Sheffield, students from the Take Ten scheme talked about having a better idea of how the Council worked:

'I *think I've got a more balanced idea, about how the council works, and I appreciate better now the difficulties that they have to cope with, I've got more understanding about each department.'*
(Sharon Kimpton, Home Help, SCC)

As described in Chapter Six, 'The Case Studies', Baxi Heating introduced a Continuous Improvement Programme after their education scheme started, with workers divided into CITS, or Continuous Improvement Schemes. Under the 'Profit Improvement Programme', all employees are encouraged to put forward 'PEPS' to reduce costs and waste. As mentioned in the case study chapter, the Financial Manager of the company has every reason to believe that it is the education programme which has helped to guarantee the success of this new management style. As quoted above, he says:

'The fact that we've had this training has given all the employees in CIT teams the confidence and ability to analyse business problems. They would never have got involved without maths training. The CITs have helped to deliver cost savings which over the last 18 months have been quite substantial. It can't be proved that it's because of the scheme, but I feel it is, because it means everyone can go on board.'
(Manager, November 1992)

The 'Baxi Panner', the 'journal of the Baxi Partnership', included a page in its March 1992 issue giving examples of some of the cost- and waste-saving ideas which panners had come up with:

'A method of producing prototype castings that reduces dramatically the development time of castings, i.e. White Boilers save £52,000 this year.'

'Selling of unusable off cuts and utilisation of scrap - £10, 000.'

'Removal of flat nuts from VP door assembly - £400.'

One Take Ten student talked about the courses encouraging people to put forward their ideas:

'[good communication] ... enables people to put their ideas forward, good ideas, which certainly would improve productivity, and leads you on into further education, so therefore you become a better tradesman or whatever, which benefits you both.'
(Alan Webb, Surveying Technician, Sheffield City Council)

One student, when asked to think about benefits that her company would gain from the classes, said:

'I don't think work benefits, but in the long run, like, we might be getting that clever we'd come up with suggestions that might help the Company.'

This student made this remark facetiously, not thinking for a minute that that situation could ever arise. We aren't sure whether the doubt in her mind was lack of confidence that she could ever come up with any such ideas, or doubt that the company would listen to her if she did put such ideas forward. What is clear is that companies who do listen to suggestions from their workers see the benefits reflected in their 'bottom lines', but that the workers need encouragement and training to be able to express their suggestions clearly and effectively. In fact, it may be inferred that some managers need training themselves in the art of listening to the people who actually do the job!

6. Improves the company's image

Respondents who mentioned this area of potential benefit of workplace Teaming schemes (5 respondents, or 7%) felt that providing this kind of training would give the company a more 'caring' image in the eyes of its employees, who would feel more valued, and thus more inclined to give more back.

'It would make people feel more valued so more committed to you as an employer.'
(Housing training officer in a large City Council)

'If you can make it a bit more enjoyable ... the incentive might be a happier and more forward looking workforce.'
(Production director in a medium sized footwear manufacturers)

The Case Studies pointed in the same directions.

'The individual benefits more re than the Company which I think is right. But there is a good spin off for the company when individuals benefit. The company pays for benefits but my view and, I hope, the company's view, is that not every piece of training needs to directly benefit the company. I believe in putting people in a new environment. So there's no direct benefit, but it lifts people's morale, which will lead to new ideas. If people are properly treated as though they are human beings, they will respond in kind. There are hidden benefits in people's attitudes, approach, and with people feeling comfortable in their environment.'
(Manager, BICC)

'Maths and English are only one element. Sending people on any class makes them feel they're considered important so that it's not just supervisors and managers who are eligible

for training. ... I would hope that it shows that they're appreciated as human beings ... It indirectly benefits the company, while benefiting them as individuals.
(Manager, Richards & Appleby)

7. Confidence Building

5 respondents (7%) mentioned the increased confidence that they felt would come out of this kind of training.

'Confidence - which would increase sales'
(Sales manager of a large electrical stores group)

More or less every student interviewed in the three case studies, and each manager, referred to the increase in confidence which had arisen from the courses. This confidence has been of benefit in different areas of people's lives - at work and at home:

'It gives you greater confidence as well, in whatever you're doing, English wise. Before, you may have tried to avoid something - you know you're capable - you tackle something you wouldn't have tackled before.'
(Student, Baxi)

'It builds your confidence up'
(Student, BICC)

'You get more confidence at the end of the day. There were two quiet women and I was surprised - they weren't as thick as I thought they was!'
(Student, BICC)

'One person has started night classes. He had no confidence before. There have been remarkable improvements. It has awakened latent talent and new ideas.'
(Manager, BICC)

Students at Sheffield also talked about increasing confidence:

'I think it just makes you more able to join in with everyone else, and give your views, even if a lot of people do not agree with you, you put your point of view across and you're not teeing to everyone, just say what you like, it gives you more confidence to do that.'
(Jennifer Cussens, Residential Social Worker, Sheffield City Council)

8. Personal Development

3 respondents (4%) mentioned the benefits to participants' own personal development:

'People may have left school too early and regretted it and got onto the treadmill of having to work and finding it difficult to get time off and finding the incentive and motivation to do it outside of work. Given the opportunity at no inconvenience to them it might spur them on to widening their horizons and do more for themselves.'
(Production director in a large footwear company).

Within the case studies, this was a major benefit mentioned by all parties in all the cases. Students talked about the benefits they had gained for themselves, and managers talked about the benefits to the company of giving something to workers for their own benefit.

'Offering people something extra for their own personal development leads to more commitment, participation and contribution.'
(Manager, Baxi)

'My son is just 13, going on 14. They're doing maths that I never even &d at school, so hopefully I will be able to help him later on.'
(Student, Baxi)

The benefits of the scheme to the older learner was mentioned by a BICC shop steward, discussed in more detail above in Chapter 5 - 'The Case Studies'. He felt that giving this group of workers an interest and an ambition, showing them that they could still learn, would solve some of the problems they had in filling their time once they retired.

And an anonymous participant at our residential weekend for students wrote:

'I plan to show people I am not just a number, and I am willing to go further on in my education to prove I can be a somebody.'

Section Two:

Blocks to Setting up Workplace Learning Schemes

Part 1: Employer Survey

The potential problems which follow are those specifically mentioned by employers, unprompted, when we asked what problems might arise connected to workplace basic skills programmes, or what might stop them putting on such training.

1. Lack of perceived need for such training

33 employers, or 44% of our sample told us that they had no need for basic skills training. The answers, however, tended to fall into two distinct categories. The first implied that the workers had good standards of literacy and numeracy and that basic skills training would not be of benefit to them (although several of the companies giving this answer then went on to talk about problems that had come up at work related to basic skills 'deficiencies'); and the second, that the workers had no need of basic skills while they were at work, and therefore training them in basic skills would be of no benefit to the organisation.

In the first group, responses tended to be similar to the one given by the Director of a small mechanical handling equipment manufacturers:

'We have no need at the moment. People are satisfying requirements.'

An example of the second type of answer was the managing director of a medium sized textile company who told us:

'Because of the nature of the business, I have a tendency to get a type of person who is very ... sometimes difficult to employ because of the education that they might have had ... they don't have to have a great deal of brain power to do the job, and I have never thought of giving employees additional training to enhance their prospects ... I don't need a high skill level, not with the type of work they are undertaking.'

A response to this second issue from within the case studies might be that several students - and managers - felt that although they couldn't apply the benefits of the courses directly to their job, they felt that the increased confidence and awareness gained would be of benefit to the company indirectly.

For example, in response to the question: 'What about the course in terms of your work? Has it changed the way you've been working?' Sharon Kimpton, a Home Help with Sheffield City Council, said:

'It's not changed it directly, reflected in the work that I do, but it's changed me personally in that I feel that I've got better communication with people, I feel more open, I can discuss things a lot freer.'

The employer responses in the fifth 'benefit', above, that dealing with job enrichment, also address this question.

2. Lack of suitable training ethos within or across a company

Of 30 interviewees who responded to the question, 8 (36%) said this kind of training would not fit in with their current training structure or ethos, or would not be a priority area. It is necessary for a whole company to take this kind of training on board: if only one manager or section shares its aims it will not thrive. One respondent gave a hint of the problems that this could cause, saying that if trainees came back from the courses and submitted reports for the management, they would be ignored, which would lead to frustration.

At BICC, out of managers of three units, two introduced the scheme and were supportive of it, and the third felt that 'for business reasons' he did not want to pursue this course. This caused problems on site as it meant that some sections of the workforce were able to benefit from the scheme, and some were not: with no possibilities of negotiation.

3. Cost and time

(Mentioned by 20 respondents in the employer survey - 28%)

The biggest perceived barrier to setting up workplace basic skills classes is their potential cost both in terms of direct costs of tutoring, and in lost production from the workforce attending classes in work rime.

In answer to our question about 'what problems or disadvantages could you see in putting on basic English or Maths classes at work' those who mentioned cost or time included issues like loss of production:

'Time, mainly: I have a problem at the moment... once you've taken people off the shopfloor they are not producing any wealth for the company.'
(Works director in a small packaging company)

Many mentioned the amount of time such training would take up:

'simply the difficulty of fitting in such training'
(manufacturing supervisor of a medium sized company making liquid coatings for the building trade)

Related to 'cost and time', two companies felt that they didn't want to train people who would then leave: for example the managing director of a medium sized textile company who told us:

'... my experience has been that at times we have lost more literate drivers once they have actually been certificated, to larger companies in the area, and I don't wish my company to become a training ground for larger companies'

At BICC, the manager we spoke to told us:

'The restriction is finance. If the business is not doing well, we can't put on this scheme.'

In our interview with Richards & Appleby's Senior Technical Manager, we were told:

'We have to plan production round it. It lowers production levels in the short term. It has been planned around it. For example, we've lowered targets. So far we've just about managed. It's come at a bad time in the recession when we're looking at minimising costs. But at the same time, that could make it the 'right time' so they'd be ready when the time comes. ... No-one anticipated the current lack of contracts. ... more people would have been hired if we'd have had more contracts so percentage-wise the loss of production should have been lower.'

At Baxi, the management felt that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the costs, and the manager quoted below linked the loss of production from the courses to that caused as a matter of course by holidays or sickness.

'It's a drain on the production department, giving the time. It's not the expense of the classes, but the expense of releasing people. Our attitude to it is 'it may cause problems, but people can do overtime or we can bring in other workers on other shifts.' We never identify it [problems with loss of production] *as being because of the open learning centre. It could be for other reasons, for example, to do with the workload, replacing people who are off sick or on holiday. I haven't heard any negative reactions. '*

In an attempt to resolve some of these problems, Baxi Heating, like some other companies, run their Open Learning scheme half in company time, half in the students' own time. At a seminar for local companies thinking about putting on this kind of scheme in November 1992, Graham Bettany, Baxi Human Resources manager, said:

'Trying to negotiate a shared time arrangement cuts costs, confirms commitment for employees, and helps achieve acceptance from non-participants, and that's very very important'.

4. Difficulty of convincing potential students that they have a need for basic skills training

(Mentioned by 12 respondents in the employer survey - 17%)

12 respondents felt that there was a stigma attached to basic skills training which would mean that workers would be unlikely to come forward to take part in the training willingly: for example the production manager of a medium sized electrical engineering company, who said:

'I don't know how people would react to you ... more or less telling them they are illiterate.'

In the case studies, as the schemes continued, more people came forward once they had found out from colleagues what the courses consisted of. It is true, however, that throughout the life of the courses there were people who still had that fear of going through the door ... only time, encouragement by the tutors and the company, and a positive attitude towards the scheme from all concerned can help.

5. Lack of available space at the workplace

4 companies (6%) mentioned this issue, including one company which did all its work on customer sites and had no available space for its own training. Small companies are less likely to have a dedicated 'training' space for this kind of work to take place.

'We are too small to have space for training in the workplace.'
(Managing director of a small instrumentation distributors).

At Fleetwood Funeral Home, a small employer with a workforce of around 8, the individual worker who was receiving the training went to a training organisation's premises once a week for classes. At Sheffield City Council's Take Ten scheme, workers from all over the city, from different jobs ranging from home help to caretaker, school cleaner to traffic warden, attend classes in the same place, on one day a week for ten weeks. An individual's particular workplace might well be too small for a training scheme of its own, but pooling the training needs of the council helped to provide premises and finances. In this kind of situation, the classes tend to last for a whole morning or afternoon at least, as it is no longer a matter of 'nipping away from the shop floor for a couple of hours'.

6. Lack of opportunities for promotion within the company once people have better skills

(Mentioned by 2 respondents in the employer survey - 3%)

It was suggested that if employees were given the opportunity to gain more qualifications and skills, it would lead to frustration if there were no opportunities for progression for them within the company.

'People might expect too much, they might feel they've been asked about their aspirations, then get bored before anything comes their way.'
(Training officer in a large biscuit factory).

It was acknowledged within each Case Study that students might use the courses to help them move on, perhaps to move away from the company as well as within it: but it was felt that the positive training policy might go some way towards attracting a good calibre of new recruits which would counteract this disadvantage. In addition, at Baxi, for example, some students were quite happy to remain in their job and use the course as escapism, to help them to play with their grandchildren on the computer for example ...

7. Difficulty of monitoring its direct benefit

(Mentioned by 2 respondents in the employer survey - 3%)

If one group of managers or trade unionists, or an individual in a company, wants to promote this kind of training, the question that is going to be asked is 'what's the bottom line' - and it is felt that the kind of benefit-it to be derived from this kind of course is intangible and 'invisible'.

'Difficult to see its effects straight away.'
(Regional Personnel Manager of a large chain of electrical retail stores.)

As mentioned above under 'finance', at least one Case Study company felt that the improvements were measurable. Three years after the scheme at Baxi first started, one of their senior financial managers told us (as mentioned above in the Case Study section)

'The fact that we've had this training has given all the employees in CIT teams the confidence and ability to analyse business problem. They would never have got involved without maths training. The CITs have helped to deliver cost savings which over the last 18 months have been quite substantial It can't be proved that it's because of the scheme, but I feel it is, because it means everyone can go on board.'

Part 2: Case Studies

The 'blocks' listed above are those which were expressed by employers as reasons which might put them off setting up workplace basic skills training, or problems which they would envisage coming up if they did put such training on at work. All are very real situations, which the companies which did set up such schemes had to address in one way or another.

It is not, of course, all plain sailing once the schemes are set up. Various problems arise: we have abstracted and 'merged' those which follow from the three Case Studies and from the other settings we have examined, and where these exist we have included ways in which the schemes concerned have attempted to overcome these problems.

8. Overcoming attitudes from colleagues and supervisors

During one set of presentations, there was some 'heckling' from the floor, when one of the workers started jeering at others who were asking the tutors for information about the courses.

One Maths tutor told us that she knew that one of her students, in particular, was having great difficulties with his foreman, which made it difficult at first for him to leave the shop floor and come to classes. She felt that he and other students were called 'a bit stupid' by their fellow workers. Elderly workers were attending the classes with younger ones, and she knew that they were getting comments from colleagues asking why they were bothering at their age. She felt that that attitude had become less noticeable over time, and could only improve as the classes went on.

In one case a student was having problems with his foreman's attitude to the courses. He showed him details of the course that he was doing, and details of other courses running at the college: shortly after that the foreman himself enrolled for a computing course at the college, and began to support the student with his learning.

The 'Goldfish Bowl' syndrome at Baxi, where everyone could see who was going to the classes originally when they took place in a glass-walled room in the centre of the shop floor, led to lots of negative comments from work mates. The Open Learning Centre's situation away from the factory floor has helped with this problem, but people still hear comments about the 'early learning centre'...

At Brooke Bond Oxo, one of the students told us:

> *We found that most people wanted to go on the courses but were afraid to go on them, because they were frightened of what the other people, you know, their colleagues, were saying to you, saying that you were a bit slow, you couldn't read, you couldn't write, and basically we went to improve on our own skills which we knew we had to improve on.*

As in this example, the more confident student will overcome these difficulties. However for those students with low self-esteem, who find it hard to go to classes anyway, this kind of attitude from colleagues could put the students off taking up the courses at all.

9. Lack of opportunities for progression in work time.

Most of the schemes we looked at were finite, with a 12 week course being offered in, say, metrication, and then the only opportunities to progress to any other education opportunities being by going on to evening classes, which might or might not be paid for by the employer.

Out of sixteen questionnaires filled in by students at Richards & Appleby, five answered the question 'how could the courses be improved' with some variation of *'they could be longer'*.

At Brooke Bond, one student said:

we didn't think there was enough time given to us to be able to attend these courses, the majority of courses we had to attend in our own time, but then after work there wasn't enough time to research, to find anything out, so this was one of the major problems ...

At Sheffield 'Take Ten', students are informed about courses which they can go on to after those first ten days. Many were able to take up these opportunities but we spoke to some students whose managers were unwilling for them to take more time out of work, or for them to change their shifts round so that they could attend classes in their own time.

At Baxi Heating, the courses at the Open teaming centre in English and Maths are now 'roll-on, roll-off', so people can join at any time, depending on space: in addition the company is sponsoring students to attend evening classes at the local further education college in any subject, in their own time: this opportunity has been taken up by a large proportion of the workforce (despite the difficulties faced by people with child care and other caring responsibilities).

10. Tutor turnover

Most ABE tutors teaching on the Case Study schemes were part-time, with short-term contracts which could be ended by a week's notice on either side. This caused problems particularly at one of our sites, where there was a high turnover of tutors, who would often be applying for permanent, or at least full-time, jobs, while working on the training schemes. In addition, they would usually be working for a college convenient to their homes: but the workplace sites would be at some distance from the college, and often the tutors - usually women - would have to travel by public transport and/or at unsocial hours, which caused some problems.

Changing teachers didn't help. You get used to one. It takes you a while to take to a new one - to get to know her.
(Student, BICC)

Conclusions

We feel that there is very useful work to be done comparing the implications of the different 'benefits' and 'blocks' on the various actors mentioned in the first section of this paper, and this is the activity which will be conducted in the 'practical' section of the workshop (or which can be done as a practical exercise by the reader).

Endnotes

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CHAPTER EIGHT

AN OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE SCOTTISH COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL AND 'POSITIVE PERFORMANCE'

S Wilkinson
Positive Performance Company

Scotland

AN OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE SCOTTISH COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL AND 'POSITIVE PERFORMANCE'

The first workplace education scheme (WPE) in Scotland was in 1988 in a collaboration between Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) and Lothian Regional Council. The course involved ten home helps, and highlighted basic skill difficulties among low-paid workers. Lothian Regional Council then went on to develop courses for other council workers in basic skills.

This pilot was followed by a SCEC research project involving 48 employees from the public and private sector. This confirmed a high degree of basic skill need among semi-skilled workers. 25% of those interviewed reported problems in their work due to lack of basic skills. There was also strong evidence that communication skills were a problem.

In 1990, SCEC extended the programme throughout Scotland in a collaboration with the Training Agency. This project involved Scottish and Newcastle Limited (S&N), Grampian Health Board and Glasgow City Council. It was successful in two of the three organisations. The problems highlighted general difficulties in setting up WPE:

- release of staff
- communications between agencies involved
- attitude of line managers
- culture not supportive of education.

Lengthy discussions with employers convinced SCEC that WPE could not rely on benign attitudes to education within companies. It became essential to show how WPE could improve performance and therefore a more focused approach was adopted, which adapted basic skill training to workplace need. However, it was found effective to retain key elements of previous pilots, including the principle of voluntary participation and learners involvement in setting the curriculum.

In 1992 a European WPE collaboration was set up under the Force Programme. Courses were run at Foseco Black Refractories in the Forth Valley area of Scotland supported by Forth Valley Enterprise and evaluated alongside projects from the Netherlands and Spain. Interesting discoveries were made about the diversity of models of WPE in Europe.

After this pilot SCEC took a step back from the delivery of WPE but retained a promoting role. A new group, Positive Performance was established in 1993 by workers from SCEC to provide WPE services. Two major projects are now underway involving the Glasgow Development Agency and Forth Valley Enterprise as well as support from the European Force Programme. Features of the new projects have been:

- more flexible and innovative approaches to basic skills
- focus on change in the workplace
- focus on organisational culture
- consideration of the problems of testing and qualifications.

WPE in Scotland is now firmly established. It is supported by various development agencies, and increasingly employers are recognising that there are economic benefits in developing their staff in this way. Lothian, Glasgow City and Borders region, now have successful schemes.

My own experience reminds me constantly that WPE is a learning process for everyone including the providers. There are various different approaches which suit various cultures. Where we have been successful, the model used has been appropriate for the culture of the organisation and played a significant role in helping the organisation fulfil its mission and objectives.

NEW LEARNING APPROACHES IN POSITIVE PERFORMANCE/GLASGOW DEVELOPMENT AGENCY WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS COURSES

Positive Performance was set up to deliver WPE in Glasgow by staff from the Scottish Community Education Council in 1993. One of our key objectives was to develop a new creative educational approach which would meet the specific needs of the learners. This led us to an investigation of various new learning ideas.

The development of our approach

We received excellent feedback from learners on the effects of our *"improve your memory"* and *"stress management"* modules which were incorporated into the basic skills courses used in Glasgow companies. In researching what had made these courses successful, certain clear patterns began to emerge. It became clear that the courses had utilised elements of several new learning approaches incorporating research on how the brain takes in information, and how people can develop their own learning skills. Further research opened out a whole range of approaches, which could usefully be adapted to basic skill training and offered opportunities to develop motivation.

Two key figures who emerged in the literature on the subject were the Rumanian Educationalist Lozanov and Howard Gardner who developed multiple intelligence theory. Other useful references included Tony Buzan on memory and mind mapping, Colin Rose who synthesised many approaches into an accelerated learning system, and Richard Bandler and John Grinder, founders of NLP which utilised sensory information to develop efficient models of learning. However, none of these figures specialised in basic education for adults. We, therefore, had to combine our research with practical experience to find a unique model appropriate to our context. This approach would place attention on building confidence in learners' abilities, creating the right atmosphere for learning, and developing learning strategies for basic skills.

In order to illustrate some of the methods which Positive Performance have employed I would like to investigate key elements of the model.

Outline of main elements of our approach

+++ essential ++ important + some use of

	Positive Performance WPE Courses
RELAXATION	+++
POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS	++
OVERVIEW	+++
ENJOYMENT OF LEARNING	+++
LEARNING STYLES	+++
MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE	+++
THINKING SKILLS	+++
NLP LEARNING TECHNIQUES	++
MEMORY TRAINING	++
MIND MAPPING	++
SPEED READING	+
LEARNING CYCLES	++
VISUALISATION	+
REVIEW	+++
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	++

Relaxation

The use of relaxation in learning is central to our approach. We have developed a "stress reduced" methodology which includes guided relaxation exercises and cognitive approaches to stress management. Our aim is:

1) To reduce the specific fears which learners have in coming back to education

2) To deal with the effects of chronic stress which learners feel in their Jobs.

3) To develop a whole brain approach to teaming.

In WPE courses we have found workers very open to relaxation exercises before learning and the benefits of decreasing tension are obvious. The problem has come from sceptical managers. We accept that we have to work within the culture of the company and are careful to explain why we are using these approaches. In all basic skills WPE, we have found some scepticism at first, but results change attitudes.

Positive Affirmations

Research has shown that the self-fulfilling prophecy is a very important factor in learning and many learners with a previously poor educational record have been told from an early age that they were not destined for success. This is a very strong factor in determining how much learners believe they can achieve. In our courses we begin by focusing on **any** personal learning success in any field, and attempt to transfer the positive feelings of achievement to the new subject to be learned. When the group feels comfortable with success, it is then possible to introduce learning affirmations which can be repeated before learning or put on cards around the room eg "Learning is Fun" "Spelling is Easy" etc (the statements always emphasise the positive).

Overview of subject Matter

W have found that learners learn better if they have a broad outline of the whole area before going into detail. This differs from the usual learning and training approach of one step at a time. At the outset of our courses the learners and the trainer skim the whole area to be learnt. The learner is then less daunted by the size of the project and is more able to place the details into the wider context. It also increases the sense of ownership and allows learners to choose the focus of teaming.

Enjoyment of Learning

Enjoyment of learning is an essential part of our approach. We aim to create experiences which are simultaneously enjoyable and meaningful. Key elements in our approach are: challenge, clear goals, immediate feedback, variety, concentration, and elements of chance. In developing learning activities we integrate these points to ensure learners feel positive about learning and overcome negative attitudes.

Learning Styles

The three divisions in learning style we employ are Visual, Auditory, and Physical. Once the learners understand their preferences, methods are employed to accommodate them, which involve the tutor in constant search for appropriate materials. Hands on experience and physical activity is much more important for a physical learner whereas diagrams and pictorial illustrations suit visual learners. In group learning, variety ensures every style is catered for.

Multiple Intelligence

Howard Gardner put forward a theory of multiple intelligence which is an absolutely key element of many innovative approaches. Gardner believes that the usual definitions of intelligence are much to narrow and constitute just two of many possible intelligences. The key intelligences which develop deep understanding are: logical, verbal, visual, musical, interpersonal, and physical. In adopting this approach we developed variety in material and delivery in order to incorporate aspects of as many intelligences as possible.

Thinking Skills

We believe it is essential to help people develop thinking skills to enable them to use these abilities with other subjects when the course is over. We have looked at various thinking approaches and are introducing analytical methods and creative thinking into our courses. This has had the effect of solving workplace problems and conflicts, as well as helping learners in further study.

NLP Learning Techniques

In NLP, emphasis is placed on developing rapport between learner and instructor. This involves specific techniques too complex to be recorded in this context but which we have found useful. NLP strategies for spelling using visualisation have also proved very beneficial. In using anything from previously defined systems we are not dogmatic but take what works for our particular context.

Memory Systems

Specific memory methods, mnemonics, visualisation and peg memory systems have been a feature of our courses. These methods were all put forward by Buzan and Lorayne in the 1970s but actually derive from much older models some of which date back to ancient Rome! The speed with which these techniques can be learnt also proves a major motivating force and is used to create early success.

Mind Mapping

Another Buzan technique, which encourages creativity, is note-taking through the use of diagrams, colour and spatial relations. They have been used by Positive Performance as a team exercise and prove a useful reference when wishing to review areas of learning. Learners are also shown how to use mind mapping to get an overview of subject matter and as a memory tool.

Speed Reading

It could be said that Speed Reading is impractical for learners with basic skill difficulties. In fact, good reading habits should be learnt at basic levels and can help people to develop more efficient approaches. We are working on material to develop better reading skills through efficient eye movement. In our experience it is also essential to systematically develop vocabulary. We have found that work on suffixes, prefixes, synonyms and antonyms, has been very useful in developing skills.

Use of Learning Cycle

Learning should be structured to fit peoples attention and retention span. Learners in any subject have moments of optimum attention and falling off periods. We aim to use these

cycles in a constructive way. In practise this means a break every 40 minutes and revision at the end and the start of learning. Revision is also built into the programmes on a weekly and monthly basis to ensure long term retention.

Visualisation

The process of making strong mental images makes the material more memorable and gives the learner a deeper involvement in learning. This is an area which we would like to use more, to develop learners involvement with and ownership of material, but it cannot be introduced without a strong degree of trust.

Review

To develop successful strategies learners should regularly review how they learnt something in order to be able to use these strategies again. We have adopted an approach which reviews how things were learnt and looks at all aspects of understanding and learning transfer.

Experiential Learning

Practical applications of learning are essential to our programme and we co-ordinate what is learnt with workplace and outside work challenges. This can involve setting particular tasks to be undertaken as home work, monitored by tutor and learner. We are now working on ways to develop extensions onto the factory floor, so workers can get real feedback. The success of the courses is measured in practical performance as well as increased flexibility, and confidence.

For further information on the above, details of courses, consultancy and trainer training, please contact Steve Wilkinson 031 228 2907.

CHAPTER NINE

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UK: THE LEEDS ADULT LEARNERS AT WORK RESEARCH PROJECT

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EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UK: THE LEEDS ADULT LEARNERS AT WORK RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

The Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds is concerned to promote lifelong learning in its broadest sense. By lifelong learning we mean structured opportunities to learn throughout adult life, for people in paid employment, in unpaid employment and in retirement. In addition to a large traditional programme of liberal education, the department has developed Access to Higher Education courses, part-time degree programmes, and educational work with trade unions, unemployment centres and community groups.

In September 1991 the Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds began a two year research project into the nature and growth of 'Employee Development' (ED) learning programmes within the workplace. It has been funded by the Universities Funding Council.

The Leeds Adult Learners at Work project team have worked closely with colleagues in other academic disciplines, including Economics, Sociology of Work, Industrial Relations, Vocational Educational and Training (VET) and Public Policy. In particular they have collaborated in the setting up of the Centre for Industrial Policy and Performance (CIPP), a multidisciplinary team based in the School of Economics and Business Studies.

This summary, like the main report, has four main sections:

Section One outlines the context of the research.

Section Two reports on the methodological approaches used in the study

Section Three reports the main findings of the research project

Section Four suggests some of the implications of the research for future practice in this area.

(1) The context of the research

In September 1991 the Department of Adult Continuing Education at the University of Leeds began a two year research project into the nature and growth of 'Employee Development' (ED) learning programmes within the workplace. Funded by the University Funding Council, the research programme had the following objectives:

a. to investigate the extent of ED learning programmes within British companies and public sector services;

b. to analyse the reasons and circumstances within workplaces, in Britain primarily, but also from an international perspective, that gave rise to ED programmes;

c. to explore the varied nature of ED programmes.

By 'Employee Development' schemes, we mean all those training and education initiatives in the workplace which

a. provide a major focus on the **personal development** of employees. ED schemes may encompass job related learning but are **broader** than job- specific training;

b. provide learning opportunities for substantial sections of the workforce previously excluded from job-specific training and educational initiatives (especially for those employees with limited previous formal education experience);

c. provide an employee-centred learning approach with learning choices and opportunities available to participants;

d. provide continuous learning opportunities rather than a one-off opportunity;

e. involve employees and/or their trade unions in the origins and administration of the programme;

f. encourage the right to learning while at work.

The research has been concerned at both a theoretical and practical level with the linkage between different spheres of human activity: economy and society, education and training and finally, economic restructuring, education and training.

At the policy level, we have been concerned to unravel the different approaches and perspectives of major actors in the development of educational and training opportunities for adults in employment. These include the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Industrial Society, Training and Enterprises Councils (TECs; LECs in Scotland), and national and local government.

While the main focus of our activity has been the private sector, we have also attempted to draw analogies with developments in the public sector. Since a fundamental interest is the relationship between economic restructuring, education and training, and since the economy increasingly operates at a global level, we have also drawn some international comparisons. This is especially important in the case of the USA, where Employee Development is a much more recognised practice than in the UK or indeed other European countries.

(2) Methodology

Preliminary work

The project was launched at a joint National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and University of Leeds Department of Adult Continuing Education conference in September 1991. The conference was attended by a broad variety of people from universities, colleges, employers and other interested bodies. Key-note speakers included representatives of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Trades Union Congress (TUC) and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

In order to get some idea of the range of firms involved in Employee Development, approaches were made to a number of organisations and individuals with interests in the field. These contacts included two of the more established ED schemes: Ford/EDAP (Employee Development and Assistance programme) and Lucas CET (Continuing Education and Training). It was clear that our methodological approach would have to be broad enough to encompass schemes with very different organisational parameters. Further, since there were relatively few schemes as focused as Ford/EDAP and Lucas CET, it would be necessary to cast our net widely in order to find out if other firms were achieving similar ED objectives by quite different means, not least using different terminology to describe them.

Collection and analysis of questionnaire data

A questionnaire was devised, piloted and revised. It sought to relate employer involvement in Employee Development to wider issues of workplace culture, personnel and training policies.

Questionnaires were sent to 70 firms who were either known to have set up ED schemes or were regarded as leaders in the field of training. This achieved a response rate of 50%. Questionnaires were also sent to a control group of firms, selected according to industrial sector, size and location to match as closely as possible the first group surveyed. Only 20% in the control group replied, which made it impossible to draw any reliable conclusions about differences between firms in the two groups. The questionnaires received back from the target group cover firms employing nearly 1 million employees. They give a clear picture of the current position with regard to ED and training in an untypical sample of large British employers: the 'market leaders' in these fields.

The Public Sector

The research methodology originally envisaged a parallel questionnaire to the private sector one being carried out with public employers (e.g. local government, health authorities). However, it was clear from the relatively poor response in the private sector 'control group' to the kind of detailed questionnaire we felt appropriate for this subject, that employers not actually running Employee Development schemes were unlikely to find the time to complete the questionnaire.- It was therefore decided by the research team to adopt more naturalistic methods. In addition to a number of public employers already known to us, contacts were established with a number of public and academic bodies involved in local government and other public sector employment and training in order to identify public employers who operate Employee Development schemes. Following initial contact with such employers, three detailed case-studies were carried out, along the same lines as described for the private sector in the next section.

Case-studies

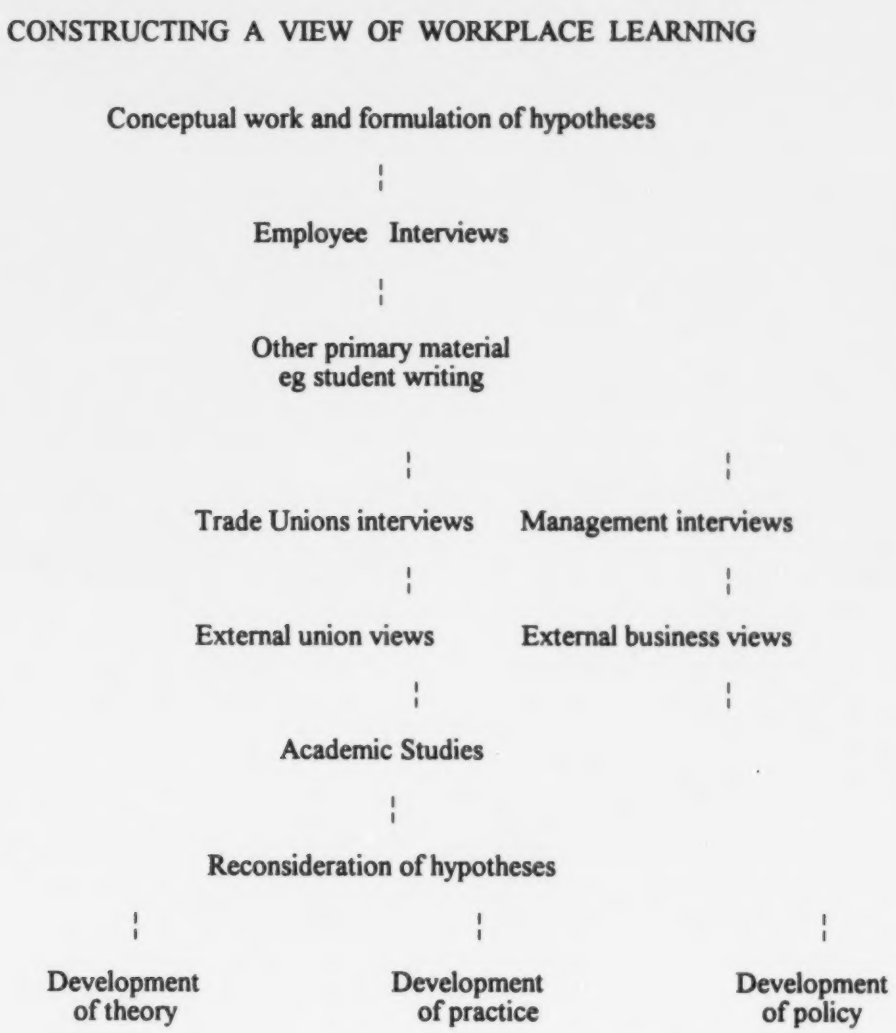
A series of case-studies were then conducted with 11 private sector firms. These were selected with careful regard to methodology, though clearly choice was constrained by questions of gaining access. The case-studies show geographical spread and reflect a range of industrial sectors. The relative bias towards Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) sectors 2 (Steel and Chemicals) and 3 (Engineering) reflects the particular interest of these sectors in ED and their strong representation in the questionnaire survey.

The research questions (expressed as project criteria) which we hoped to gather detailed information on included:

* the extent to which schemes have trade union involvement or other employee involvement in their setting up or running
* the extent to which schemes offer employees choice in relation to education and training
* the basis that schemes have in an analysis of technical, economic and social change
* the extent to which schemes prioritise the less well educated and less skilled and compensate in some way for previous negative experience of education and training, and contribute to equal opportunities in employment, education or training
* the extent to which ED schemes represent significant educational innovations and new structures for adult learning, and have policy implications for the extension of lifelong learning.

A major tool of analysis within the case-studies was thematic analysis. Given the lifelong learning perspective which informs the whole study, the views of employees held the status of a privileged body of knowledge. At the same time, those views were analysed carefully in relation to those of other important social actors in the work setting: managers, personnel and training officers, trade union representatives. Other academic studies were used as a further way of assessing the significance of the material collected in workplace interviews. Thus the

recommendations for development of theory, practice and policy (see Section 4) stem directly from the research methodology. This is represented in diagrammatic form below:



(3) Project Findings

The extent of Employee Development: a typology

There are significant differences between firms in their approach to ED. The evidence collected by questionnaire survey, strengthened by subsequent case-studies, is that among employers investing in ED, there are ideal types: the 'Super-trainers' and the 'Personal developers'. These ideal types have a significant impact on who participates and the outcomes for individual employees. However, these are ideal types: personal development takes place within the 'super-trainers'; training is not absent from the 'personal developers'.

The super-trainers

The working methods of this group are characterised by multi-tasking and multi-skilling, an emphasis on team-work, and the application of Information Technology at all levels. In terms of training they normally have an Open Learning Centre, and provide advice and guidance for employees. This may in turn be related to the annual appraisal system. They will have contact with at least one educational institution and sponsor some employees on technical and professional courses in Further and Higher Education. They do not usually have trade union involvement in training. They do not normally emphasise personal development as an objective, or if they do so, place it in a narrow Human Resource Management context which is more concerned with the firm's needs than employees' needs.

The personal developers

These firms are remarkably similar to the 'super-trainers' in terms of working methods and approach to training. By contrast, they are much more likely to have trade union involvement, and are normally able to separate out the budget for Employee Development from the general Training budget. Their approach emphasises the personal development of employees, offers choice of subjects to be studied and establishes an element of entitlement to education. It is in this sense that our working definition of ED points out that it may include job-specific training but that its scope broadens to include opportunities for broader personal development through education.

The extent of Employee Development

The completed and usable questionnaires were concentrated in four sectors:

1. Coal, gas and power
2. Steel and chemicals
3. Engineering
4. Retailing

There was an even split between UK-owned firms (many of them UK-based multinationals) and foreign owned multinationals. However a higher percentage of foreign-owned firms (82%) than UK-owned firms (53%) has established fully-fledged ED schemes. Otherwise, it is difficult from this sample to draw reliable conclusions about what sorts of firms are likely to establish ED schemes. For example, some firms operated on just one site, others on multiple sites. While Ford/EDAP and Lucas CET are good examples of multi-site ED schemes, Sheerness Steel and Colman's of Norwich 'Nice Little Learner' are examples of single-site schemes.

The costs of ED

It has proved very difficult to provide details on costs, since ED costs are not always disaggregated from general training costs, may be calculated at corporate, plant or departmental level, and may be expressed as a percentage of turnover or payroll. Costs are most obvious where schemes establish an entitlement for employees to take courses up to a

particular amount of money (this may vary from £50-£200 per employee). Those few firms which have attempted cost-benefit analysis point out that ED costs are tiny compared with total training budgets. It is also the case that many of the gains (e.g. confidence, positive attitude to work) are difficult to quantify.

Evaluation of ED schemes

In theory, any education or training experience should be evaluated. In practice, training is all too often judged by quantity rather than quality or outcomes. Our case-studies revealed scepticism about and resistance to formal training courses by many employees we interviewed. There was evidence of a disenabling separation between theory and practice, between trainers intentions and trainees' perceptions. The negative reaction to some forms of job-specific training created a very unfavourable contrast with the positive reactions to broader educational courses within Employee Development schemes. Yet clearly while any evaluation in terms of outcomes for employees is very positive indeed, we do not yet know enough about the relationship between generic educational skills and generic employment skills to even design an evaluation scheme which relates Employee Development directly to the requirements of industry. This creates a deeply flawed situation: while the costs of ED are only too easy to quantify (tuition costs; cover; promotion of and administration of schemes; guidance) the benefits are much more difficult to express in financial terms (changes in attitudes; improved confidence; positive approach to change).

Employee Development and Industrial Relations

In our Interim Report, we noted that while 52% of employers in our survey registered an improvement in Industrial relations as a result of the implementation of ED schemes, 23% saw no change, and 23% did not complete this section. We found this surprising, since ED is clearly rooted in Human Resource Management, which in turn is commonly seen as an alternative to adversarial Industrial Relations. In the case-studies it became clear that this was an accurate reflection of what was happening on the ground. While in some firms, there was positive co-operation over ED and both management and unions felt committed, we found two other prevalent attitudes:

1. ED, like other training matters, was considered to be a management prerogative

2. Where not negotiated as a right, ED was seen as a way of dividing the workforce, and developing channels of communications with employees that by-passed their union representatives.

Both these attitudes are damaging for the growth of ED. Human Resource Development suggests both alternative models of Industrial Relations, but can itself be perceived as an **alternative** to IR, a way of side-lining the unions for the foreseeable future. It seems a high risk strategy. As we make clear in the next two sections, there are clear gains for both employees and employers in ED, and the recommendation in Section Four show how those mutual benefits can be given structure and form, with the active involvement of unions and other worker representatives

Outcomes for individual workers

There are conceptual and methodological problems in discussing outcomes. Unlike job-specific training, which can be measured using narrow judgements of competence based on a functional analysis of work processes, the outcomes of learning activities designed to promote personal development are more likely on balance to be long-term rather than short-term, and are subject to unpredictability. The consistency with which particular themes were picked up in the employee interviews does begin to suggest important themes which have a significance beyond the limits of the research project. There is also some published material containing learners' views. In summary form, we have identified the following positive outcomes for participants in ED:

Participation outcome 1:
The opportunity to resume education in later life can compensate for negative experiences of initial education.

Participation outcome 2:
Flexibly operated ED schemes, especially where Open Learning is a component, can help to break down the barrier to participation in conventional Further and Adult Education represented by shift- work patterns.

Some continuing problems:
Making time for study can be difficult for the employee, while providing cover at work for released employees can be difficult for the employer.

Education and training outcome:
ED schemes allow for the development of employees beyond the limits of training required for current tasks.

Equal Opportunities outcome:
ED schemes have particular benefits in unlocking the aspirations of unqualified employees, especially women.

Personal confidence outcome:
ED can begin to tackle the major problem of lack of confidence that many adults experience in their working lives and beyond.

Labour markets outcome:
ED can help employees prepare for the unpredictable nature of the labour market, and the possibility of future redeployment or redundancy.

Employers: perspectives and ambitions

For a number of reasons, it is difficult to speak with confidence of 'outcomes' of ED for employers. It is more ambiguous, less categorical than assessing employee outcomes. Firstly, ED schemes differ greatly, both within the 'super trainer' and 'personal developer' ideal types, and also within those ideal types. Secondly, there is a bigger gap between intentions and realisation, between the claims managers make about their work, and what can be gleaned from looking at figures and talking to employees. Thirdly, there is a lack of evaluative work on ED schemes. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, ED is usually only one part of Human Resource Development practices, which in turn is only one part of overall management strategy.

Employer perspectives

Understanding the organisation:
Employers hope that employees will acquire a clearer understanding of how their job fits in with a broader whole firm perspective. This should encourage them to identify with the firm's overall objectives.

Flexibility:
ED is part of management strategy to encourage flexibility, i.e. less rigid job demarcations, the ability to take on new tasks, team-work and positive attitudes to change.

Equal opportunities:
ED schemes can contribute towards the aspirations of employers to implement equal opportunities practices

Learning culture:
ED is a positive contribution towards developing a 'learning culture' in the workplace

Internal labour market:
ED can contribute towards creating a vibrant internal labour market, which is of particular importance to employers with plans for future expansion

Employer and employee perspectives: a summary

EMPLOYER PRIORITIES	COMMON INTERESTS	EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES
Understanding the organisation	Equal opportunities	Participation in education
Workplace culture	Labour market Education and training	
Flexibility	Confidence building	

While the benefits to employees are personal and specific, employer perspectives on ED reveal that it cannot be considered apart from the wider Human Resources and management strategies of the employer.

(4) Recommendations and Implications

Summary

Objective	Short-term (practice)	Long-term (policy)
1. Setting up an ED scheme	Networking Involving employees	National Employee Development Agency (NEDA)
2. Costing ED	The need for clarity	Appropriateness of public support
3. Personal growth	Building broad-based ED schemes	Balancing economic and social aims within employment
4. Transferability and Progression	Liaison with educational institutions Liaison with accreditation bodies, e.g. NCVQ, Open College networks	
5. A learning culture	Setting priorities	Lifelong learning focus
6. Small firms	Networking Local government TECs and LECs	Appropriateness of public support
7. Constructive partnerships	Management models Trade union models	NEDA
8. Guidance	TEC initiatives NEDA LEA initiatives Educational institutions	
9. Monitoring and research	Establishing criteria	NEDA

Recommendations and implications. a commentary

1. *Setting up an ED scheme* involves networking both within firms and between firms. Management and unions need to work together to ensure mutual benefit. Outside bodies such as NIACE, TEED and the universities have roles to play as critical supporters of ED. In the longer term, a National Employee Development Agency should act as a focus for information, consultancy and evaluation.

2. *Costing ED.* Cost benefit analysis is inappropriate. In the context of a comprehensive policy towards adult learning for people both in and outside work, it may be appropriate in the future to provide public support for general education opportunities provided at the workplace. In the meantime, the costing of ED schemes should relate to clearly established priorities and offer the same entitlement to those within and outside paid work.

3. *Personal growth* involves moving from the super-trainer to the personal developer model, and building ED schemes which include opportunities for adults to take part in a wide variety of learning activities. By implication, this suggests developing a new balance between the economic and social aims of employment, i.e. between profit and efficiency on the one hand, and the provision of meaningful work and opportunities for personal development in society.

4. *Transferability and progression.* Employers should liaise with educational institutions and award-making bodies (e.g. NCVQ, Open College networks) in order to ensure progression from one stage of learning to the next and a comprehensive system of accreditation which is transparent to both individuals and their present and future employers. There is common interest of government, employees and employers in meeting this aim.

5. Building *a learning culture* implies that the aim of the organisation is to involve the whole workforce in development activities, which is also the aim of the National Education and Training targets (NETTs), and of internationally recognised objectives of lifelong education. This can only be achieved by setting priorities which make it clear that those employees with few if any educational or vocational qualifications are in urgent need of development.

6. *Small firms (SMEs)* are unlikely to develop ED schemes without external support. Such support may come through TECs and LECs and through the activities of local authorities. SMEs will certainly require funding support if they are to promote general learning opportunities through the workplace.

7. *Constructive partnerships* require initiatives to set them up. This may come from management, trade unions, or outside agencies (e.g. TECs, LECs, Workbase). While Workbase has a clear model for such initiatives, there is an urgent need within TECs / LECs, and both management professional organisations and trade unions to build appropriate models of partnership. In the longer term this is clearly a role which a National ED Agency could perform.

8. *Guidance* is a crucial issue, given the complexity of adult motivation to learn. A particular strength of the FORD/EDAP scheme is the existence of independent local advisers; in many firms such guidance mechanisms as exist are too closely linked to appraisal schemes to be perceived by employees as providing independent advice. A number of initiatives are in existence, sponsored for example by local TECs. There is a clear need to link up with local Educational Guidance and Careers Guidance agencies, and in the longer term, the National ED Agency might well assume responsibility for promoting the guidance aspect of ED work at a national level.

9. *Monitoring and research* are both underdeveloped activities within ED. Employers have an urgent need to develop methods of evaluation which encompass the broad aims of ED. To do so effectively they need to also be able to call on the resources of a specialised agency (NEDA) which would provide expert, independent advice to employers, trades unions and government.

APPENDIX ONE

The proposed National Employee Development Agency (NEDA)

Functions

1. to act as a focus for information, consultancy and evaluation
2. to offer advice on partnership approaches to Employee Development, building on the experience of Workbase and successful employer initiatives
3. to assume responsibility for promoting Educational Guidance within the workplace
4. to advise on relevant evaluation and monitoring techniques
5. to act as a focus for independent research in the field of Employee Development
6. to develop further public policy on Employee Development

Organisation

Discussions should take place without delay on the establishment of this Agency, involving the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), interested employers and employee representatives, the Department of Employment (Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate - TEED) and academic researchers.

APPENDIX TWO

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT - Useful contacts and addresses

Department of Adult Continuing Education The University of Leeds, LEEDS LS2 9JT	Tel: 0532-333222
Centre for the Study of Education and Training (CSET) Lancaster University, LANCASTER, LA1 4YL	Tel: 0524-65201 x 2864
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) 19b De Montfort Street, LEICESTER LE1 7GE	Tel: 0533-551451
Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) 90 Haymarket Terrace, EDINBURGH, EH12 5LQ	Tel: 031-313-2488
Workbase Training 67a High Road, Wood Green, LONDON N22 6BH	Tel: 081-889-8991
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) 229/231 High Holborn, LONDON WC1V 7DA	Tel: 071-405-4017
Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) 30-32 Southampton Street, LONDON WC2E 7RA	Tel: 071-379-9400
Policy Studies Institute (PSI) 100 Park Village East, LONDON NW1 3SR	Tel: 071-387-2171
Employment Department Training Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED) Moorfoot, SHEFFIELD S1 4PQ	Tel: 0742-753275
The Industrial Society 3 Carlton House Terrace, LONDON SW1Y 5DG	Tel: 071-839-4300
Trades Union Congress (TUC) Congress House, Great Russell Street, LONDON WC1B 3LS	Tel: 071-636-4030
Scottish Trades Unions Congress (STUC) 16 Woodlands Terrace, GLASGOW G3 6DF	Tel: 041-332-4946
Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Education and Training Directorate 103 Oxford Street, LONDON WC1A 1DU	Tel: 071-379-7400
Confederation of British Industry 5 Claremont Terrace, GLASGOW G3 7XT	Tel: 041-332-8661